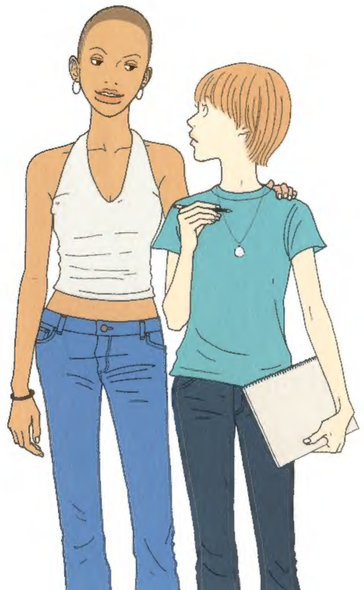

free soul

フリー・ソウル　やまじえびね

フリー・ソウル

やまじえびね

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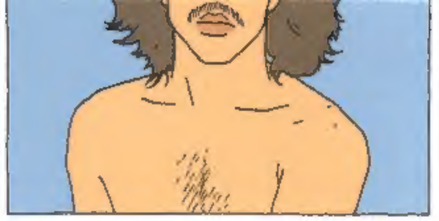
FREE SOUL

EBINE YAMAJI



So Damn Happy

I HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE
MARVIN GAYE

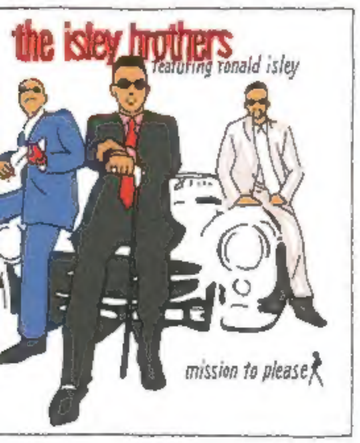
ZAPP
II

musiq
a joshisen

JOi
star kitty's revenge
ADVISORY

TERRY CALLIER
TIMEPEACE

Carl Thomas
Let's Talk About It

KEITH SWEAT

the isley brothers
featuring ronald isley
mission to please

Elisha La'Verne
Sensuous

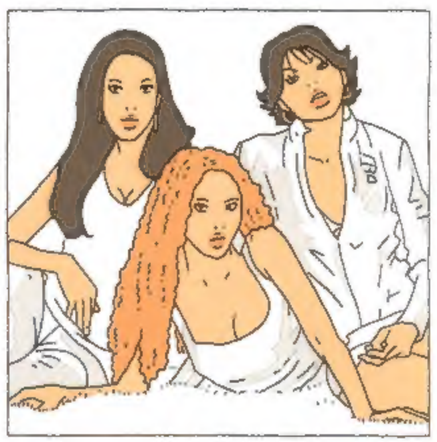
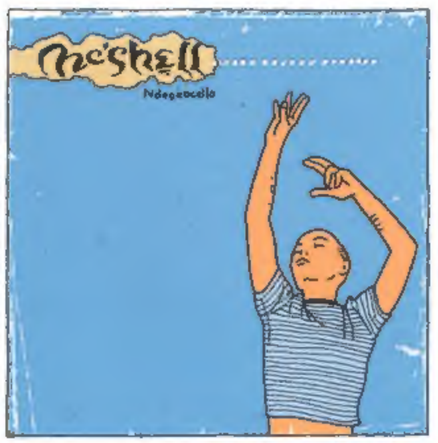
PARLIAMENT
Mothership Connection

Cookie: The Anthropological Mixtape

SWIRL
DON'T LEAVE ME
THE IMPRESSIONS

AL GREEN
I CAN'T STOP

LOVE IN STEREO

MAXWELL'S URBAN HANG SUITE


meshell
Ndegeocello

silk
LOVE SESSION

"mellow"

STAX

Kindred
the family soul

macy gray

FREE SOUL

EBINE YAMAJI

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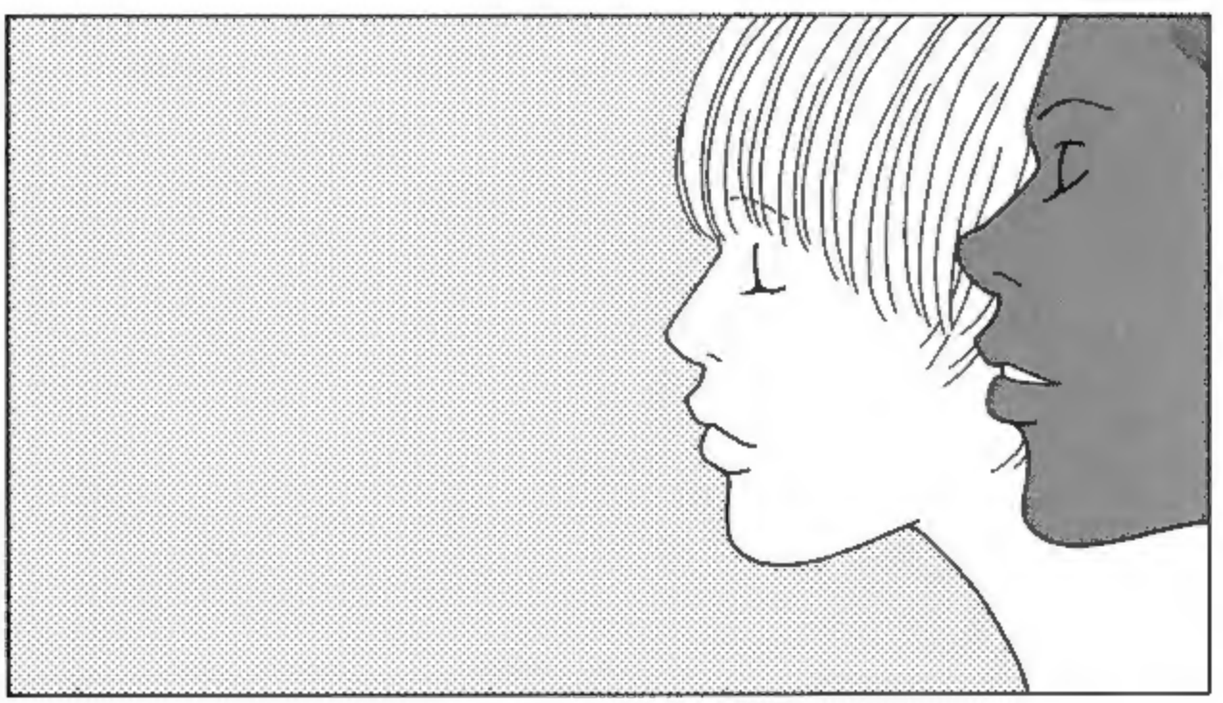
C O N T E N T S

Chapter.1	Angie	3
Chapter.2	Niki	19
Chapter.3	Rhythm and Blues	37
Chapter.4	Mom	53
Chapter.5	Mihoko	69
Chapter.6	Dad	85
Chapter.7	My Girl	101
Chapter.8	At Home	117
Chapter.9	Friday Night	133
Chapter.10	Heartbreaker	149
Chapter.11	Talk to You	165
Final	Loneliness	181
Your Love Song		197



Chapter 1 Angie

I'll definitely turn your story into a manga someday.

Angie. A Black, skinhead singer.

You may be a fictional character,

but you *are* alive—inside me.

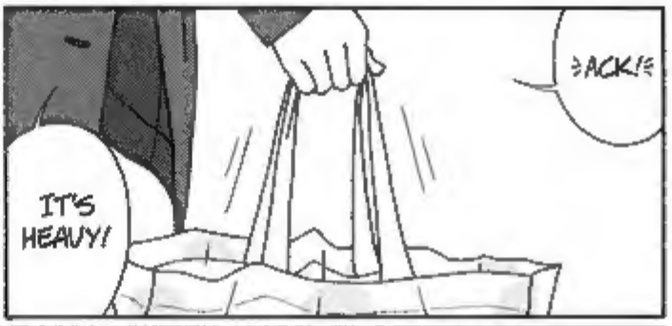
even though I had no particular idea what I was going to do.

I had a big fight with my mother and ran out,

Well, let's start with something that happened a year ago.

TOILETRIES AND UNDER-WEAR AREN'T THINGS YOU CAN ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO BUY FOR YOU.
THEY'RE THINGS YOU HAVE TO SEE WITH YOUR OWN TWO EYES AND CHOOSE FOR YOURSELF. HERE, LIFT IT.
HUH?

WHAT?
BUT YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT. IT'S NOT VERY FAR.
WHAT? HEY!


>ACK!<
IT'S HEAVY!

REALLY ?
OH,

IF YOU HAVE SOME-WHERE TO GO, THAT'S FINE THEN.

HUH?

DID YOU JUST REMEMBER SOMETHING URGENT YOU HAVE TO DO?

I LEFT HOME WHEN I WAS 15, AND WENT TO ROOM AT MY AUNT'S HOUSE.
HOW OLD ARE YOU?
I'M 22.
MY MOTHER WAS AN EXTRAORDI-NARILY TALENTED WOMAN, BUT SHE BARELY LOOKED AFTER ME AT ALL.
I SEE. YOU'RE ALL GROWN UP NOW, THEN.
I WAS AL-WAYS GETTING HELP FROM MY BROTHER, WHO WAS THREE YEARS OLDER THAN ME.
PEOPLE THAT ORDINARY ARE RARE.
MY BROTHER WAS AVERAGE IN EVERYTHING.
I'VE NEVER BEEN LESS THAN THE ABSOLUTE BEST.
I ENTERED COLLEGE AT THE TOP OF MY CLASS, THEN GRADUATED AT THE TOP OF MY CLASS TOO.
I, ON THE OTHER HAND,
WAS THE BEST AT EVERY-THING I TRIED.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M SAYING? I'M ALWAYS AT THE TOP.
TH-THAT'S INCRED-IBLE.
HUH?
I'VE NEVER BEATEN MY MOTHER IN ANYTHING.
BUT I CAN'T COMPARE TO HER.
NOT ONCE.

WELCOME HOME.
SUMIHIKO!
SUMIHIKO! PUT THE KETTLE ON.
SHE KINDLY CARRIED MY BAG FOR ME.
MAKE ENOUGH FOR HER TOO.
SHE'LL BE LIVING THERE STARTING TODAY.
ONCE YOU'VE FINISHED TAKING A BREAK, SUMIHIKO,
PLEASE CLEAN UP THE EMPTY ROOM.
WHAAAT!? WHEN DID WE DECIDE ON THAT!?
BUT- WELL- THAT IS--
OH, YOU DON'T WANT TO?

THIS ISN'T AN ACT OF KINDNESS. IT'S NOTHING OF THE SORT. I DETEST AGGRESSIVE KINDNESS AND HYPOCRISY!
THIS IS A WHIM.
ALL RIGHT? YOU...
OH, YES, WHAT WAS YOUR NAME AGAIN? KEITO? KEITO!
THAT WOULD BE COMPLETELY RIDICULOUS.
BUT IF YOU THINK THAT MAKES ME A FLIGHTY PERSON, YOU'RE DEAD WRONG.
A WHIM?
I'M SORRY.
NO.
HUH?
I HAVE THREE SONS. ONE BECAME A SURGEON, ANOTHER A LAWYER, AND THE THIRD, AN ARCHITECT.
DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT SIGNIFIES?

TELL ME THE TRUTH. ARE YOU BAFFLED BY THIS?
I'LL AT LEAST GET YOU A BED BY TONIGHT.
IT WON'T BE NEW, THOUGH.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT I WAS GOING TO DO BEFORE. I DIDN'T WANT TO IMPOSE ON ANY OF MY FRIENDS.
AND I'VE
NO, I'M NOT. I FEEL LIKE I'VE JUST HAD AN UNBELIEVABLY GOOD STROKE OF LUCK.
REALLY.
ONLY JUST STARTED GOING OUT WITH SOMEONE.

AND
I ASSIST HER-- I DOUBLE AS A MODEL AND A COOK.
SHE'S PAST 80, BUT SHE KEEPS ON TIRELESSLY PRODUCING WORKS-- SHE'S AN ARTIST. HER NAME IS TAKEUCHI RUI.
WHO IS THAT WOMAN?
BY COOK,
DO YOU MEAN THAT YOU MAKE ALL OF RUI-SAN'S FOOD FOR HER?
I COMMUTE HERE FROM THAT BRICK-RED APART-MENT OVER THERE.
I'M HERE FROM EIGHT IN THE MORNING 'TIL EIGHT AT NIGHT.
IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM WITH THAT, THEN COOK FOR YOUR-SELF.
THAT'S ...
COOK FOR MYSELF ...
MINE TOO.
AND YOURS, AS OF TODAY.

but was blessed with a part-time job.

Three months after *that*, I broke up with my lover,

I tried and failed to reconcile with my mother.

* Parliament-Funkadelic, two bands with common members.

* Tenchou: store manager

WHAT'S BROUGHT THAT ON ALL OF A SUDDEN, TENCHOU? *
SO WHEN WILL I GET TO READ YOUR MANGA?
JAMES
ARE REALLY GREAT, AREN'T THEY?
GLEN GOINS'S VOCALS
YOU'VE BEEN STUDYING UP HUH, BABY?
YEAH.
I've finally begun to feel like I've settled into my new life.
The seasons cycled through, and a year passed.

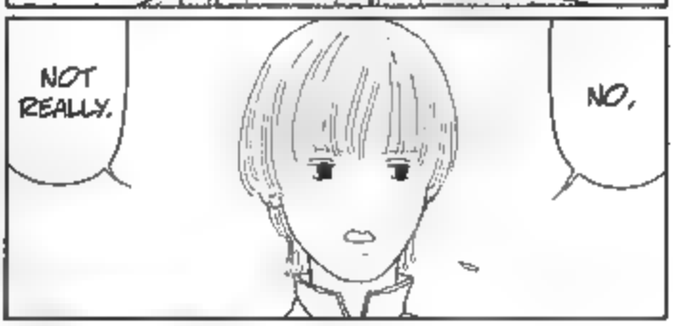
Oh, that's right. There is one drawback to it.

I TOLD YOU I WAS GOING TO HAVE DINNER OUT, DIDN'T I?
OH? THIS MORN-ING,
WELCOME HOME.
WANT TO GO OUT DANCING ?
YEAH. I'M NOT HERE FOR THAT.
IT SEEMS LIKE YOU DON'T GO OUT MUCH AT NIGHT, THOUGH.
NOT YOUR THING?
THERE'S A NEW CLUB ON JUNK STREET. IT'S PRETTY GOOD.
HAVING A LITTLE FUN IN A PLACE LIKE THAT EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE ISN'T BAD.
OH.
I GUESS SO.
IT'S NOT REALLY THAT I DON'T LIKE IT, I JUST FEEL LIKE MY FREE TIME IN THE EVENINGS IS PRECIOUS.

KEITO-SAN,
ARE YOU STILL HUNG UP ON THAT PERSON YOU BROKE UP WITH?
HUH!?
NO, I'M TOTALLY OVER THAT.
WHY DO YOU ASK?

WELL, 'NIGHT THEN.
GOOD NIGHT.

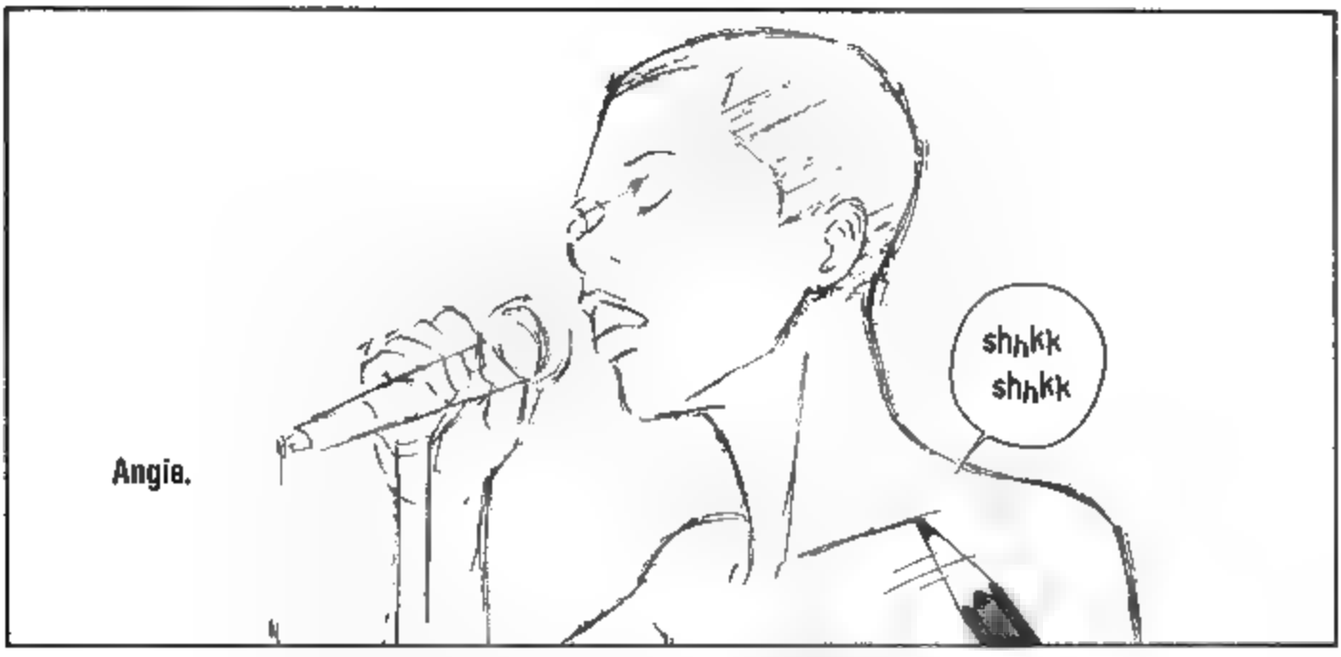
DID I ASK SOME-THING I SHOULDN'T HAVE?

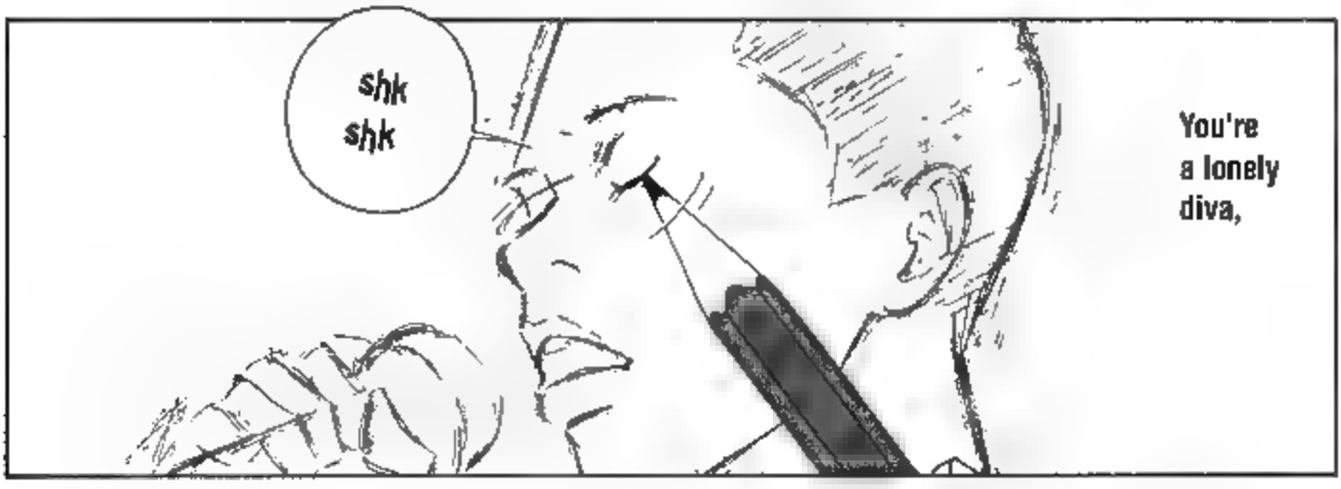

NOT REALLY.
NO,

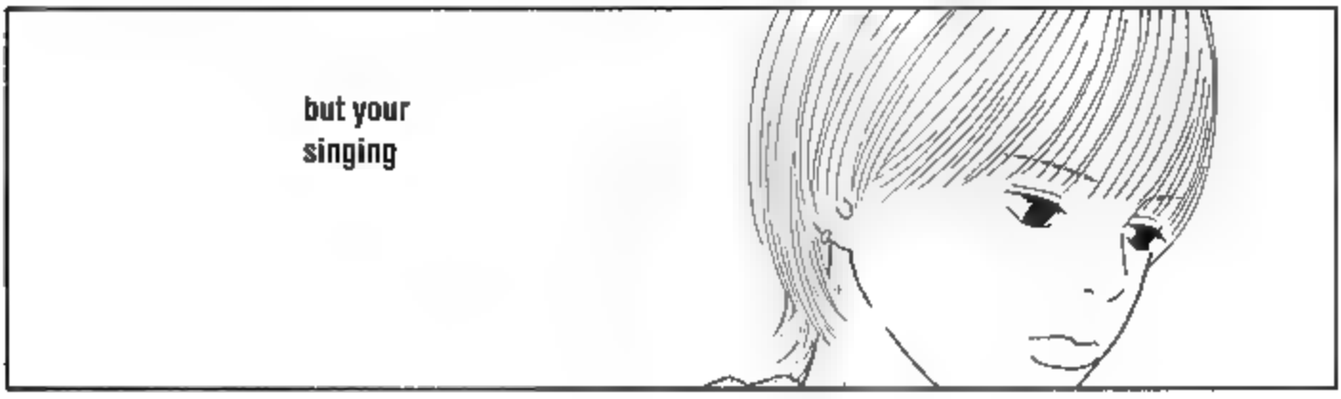
He cooks for me, so I really shouldn't feel this way,
Kitazawa Sumihiko. 28 years old.

I don't like the way he looks, the way he talks, or the way that he's good at cooking. None of it.

but the truth is that I don't like him.





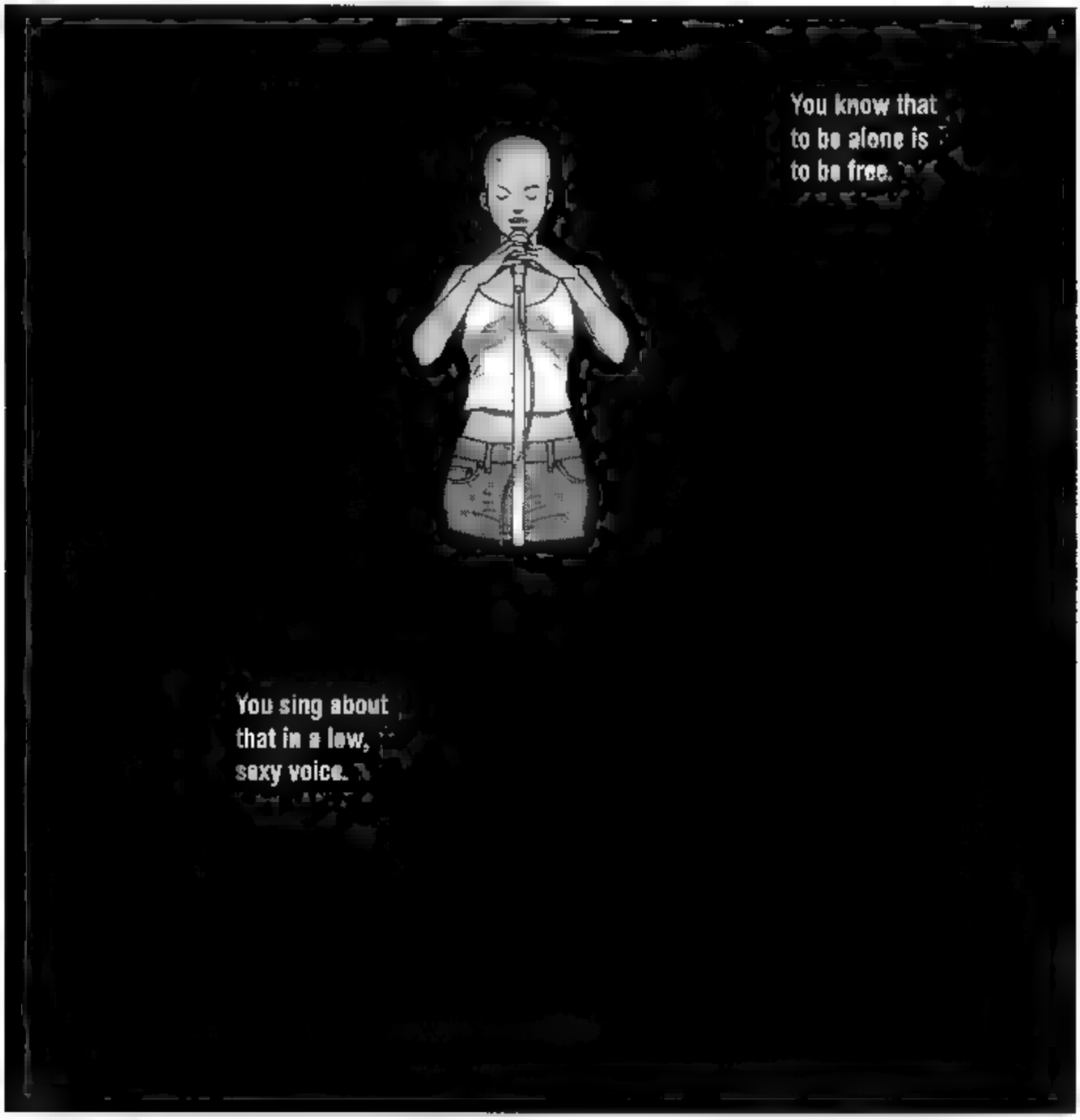


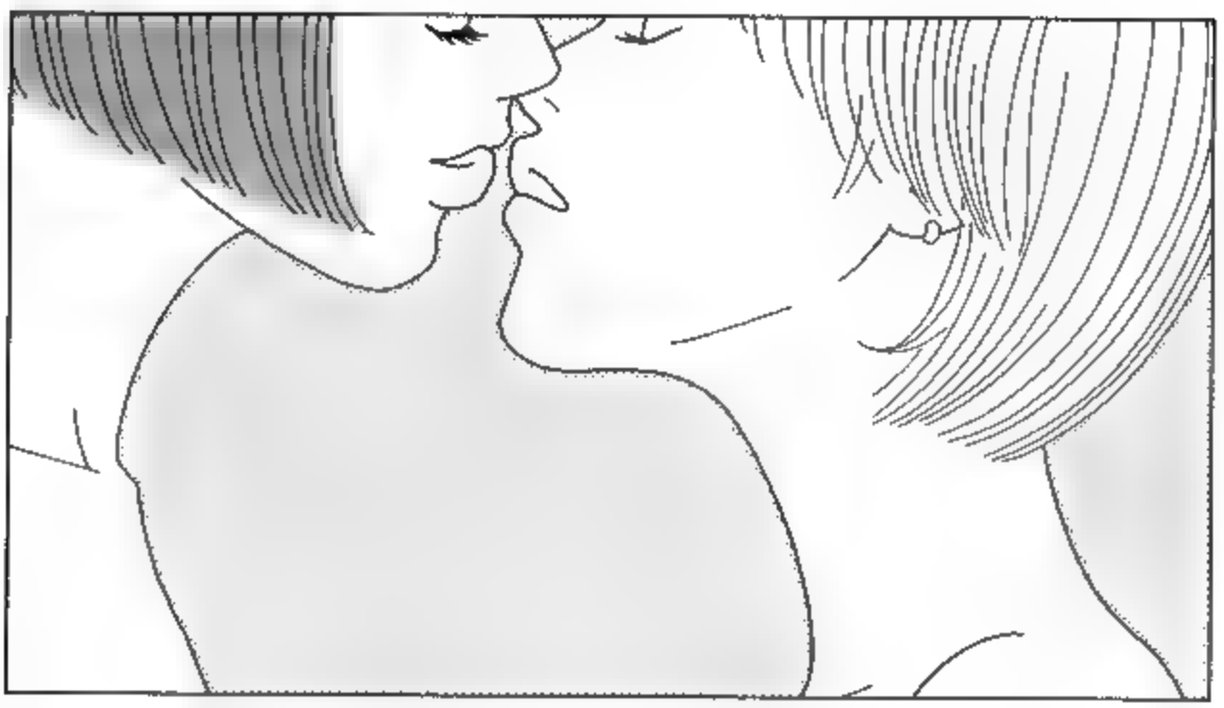
gives
hope to
other
lonely
people.

I want you to
influence me.

I want to
become one
with you.

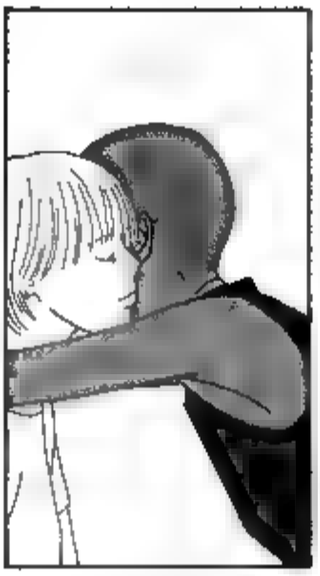
You don't mind being alone, Angie.


You know that to be alone is to be free.
You sing about that in a low, sexy voice.



Chapter 2 Niki

Angie. I dreamed about you last night.



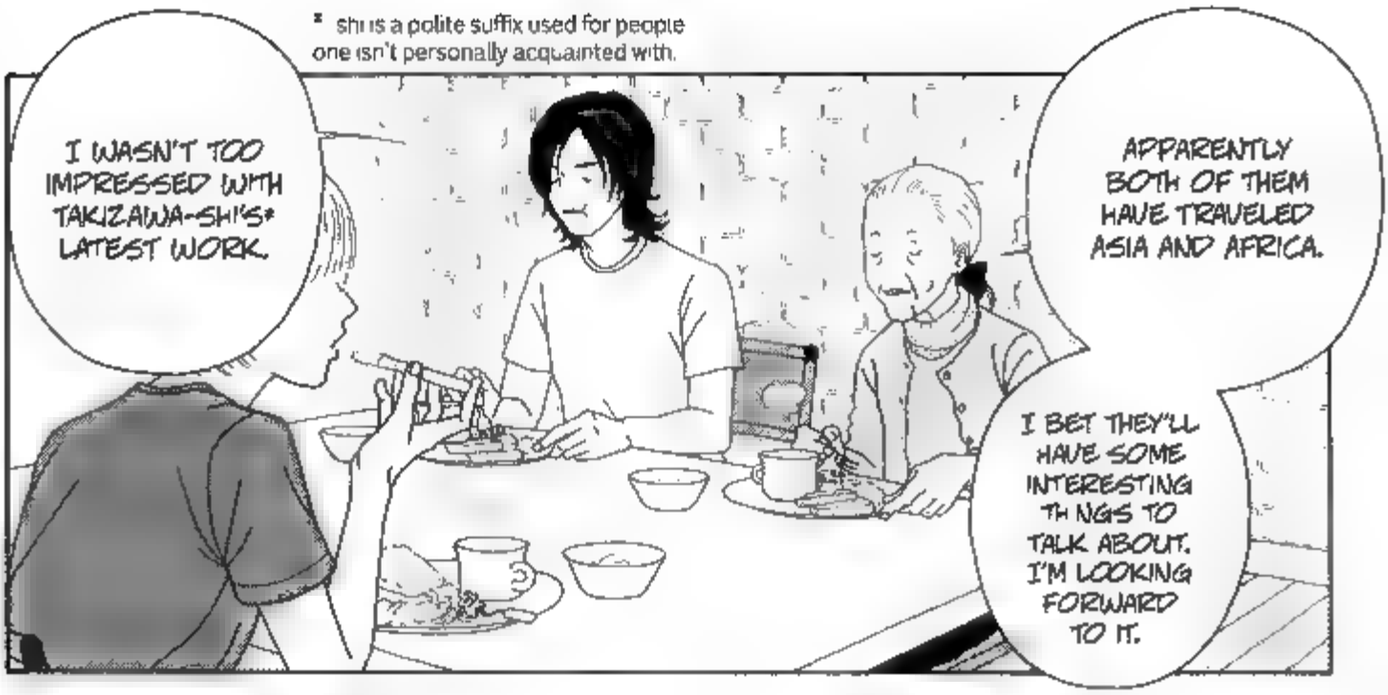
When you embraced me, I had the impression that I was smelling something fragrant.

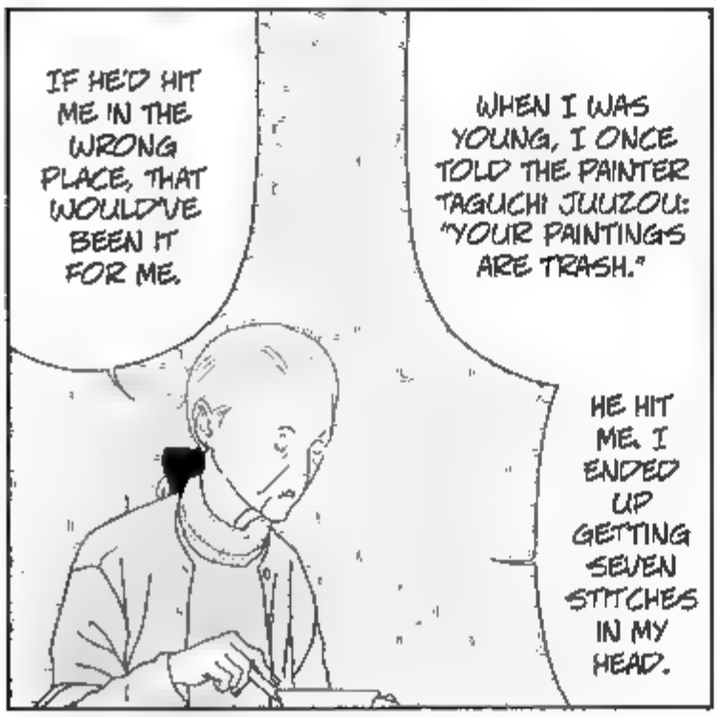
And I had a feeling that something wonderful was about to happen.

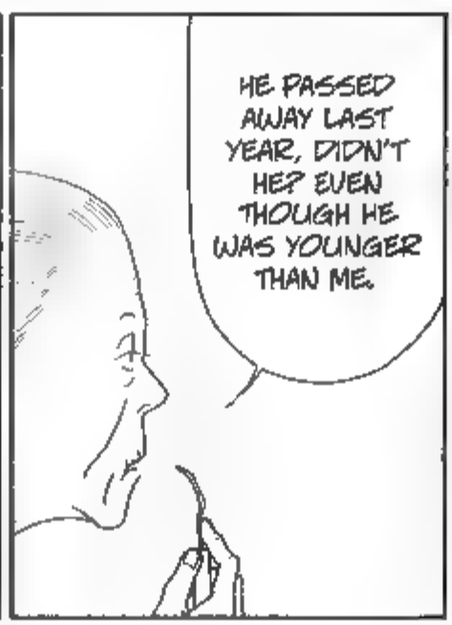
Yes, I do know that I already have plenty of happiness in my life. And I'm grateful for that, of course.

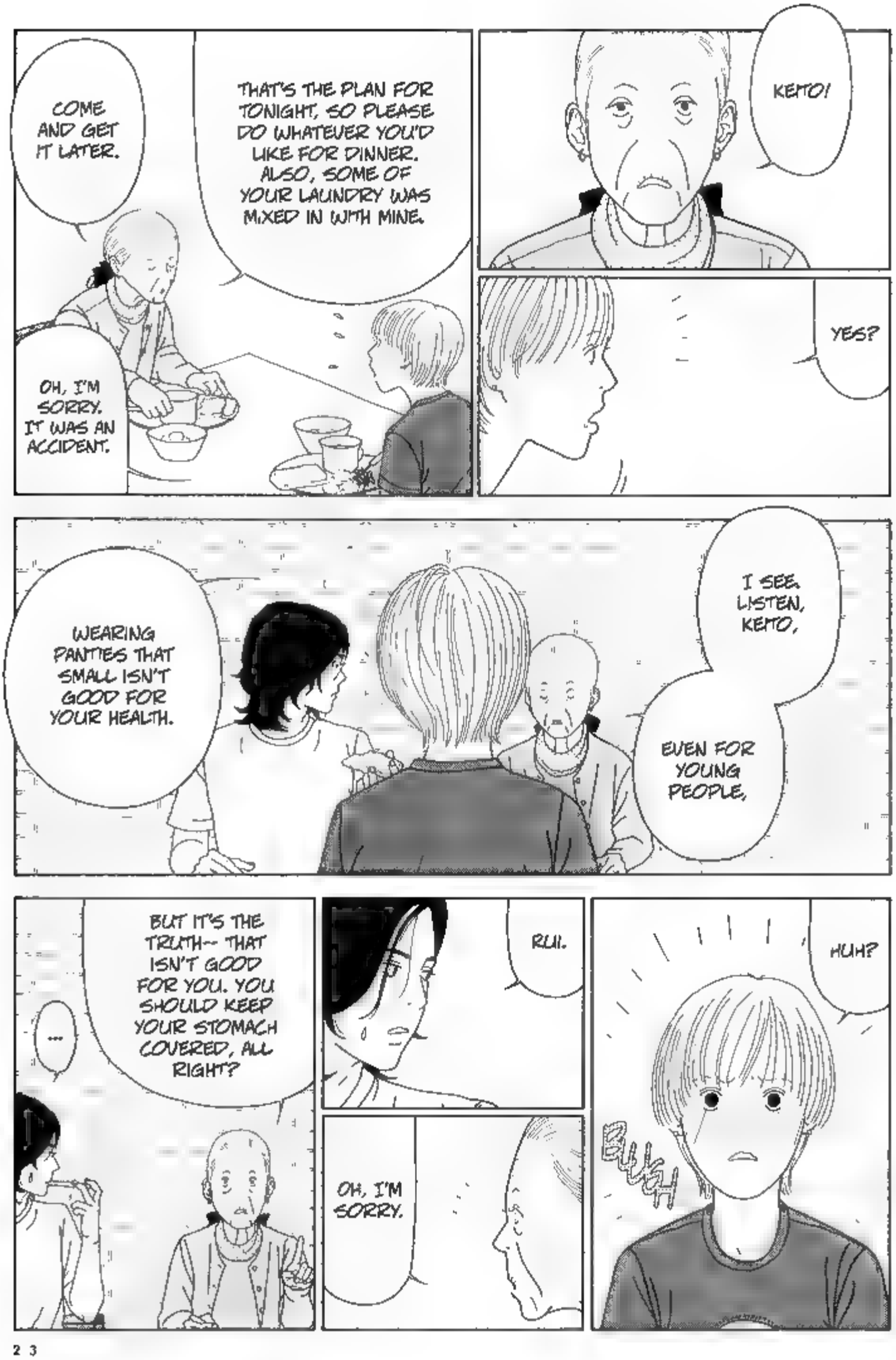
When I woke up at twenty past eight, breakfast was ready and waiting for me, like always.

* shi is a polite suffix used for people one isn't personally acquainted with.


I WASN'T TOO IMPRESSED WITH TAKIZAWA-SHI'S* LATEST WORK.
APPARENTLY BOTH OF THEM HAVE TRAVELED ASIA AND AFRICA.
I BET THEY'LL HAVE SOME INTERESTING THINGS TO TALK ABOUT. I'M LOOKING FORWARD TO IT.


IF HE'D HIT ME IN THE WRONG PLACE, THAT WOULD'VE BEEN IT FOR ME.
WHEN I WAS YOUNG, I ONCE TOLD THE PAINTER TAGUCHI JUUZOU: "YOUR PAINTINGS ARE TRASH."
HE HIT ME. I ENDED UP GETTING SEVEN STITCHES IN MY HEAD.



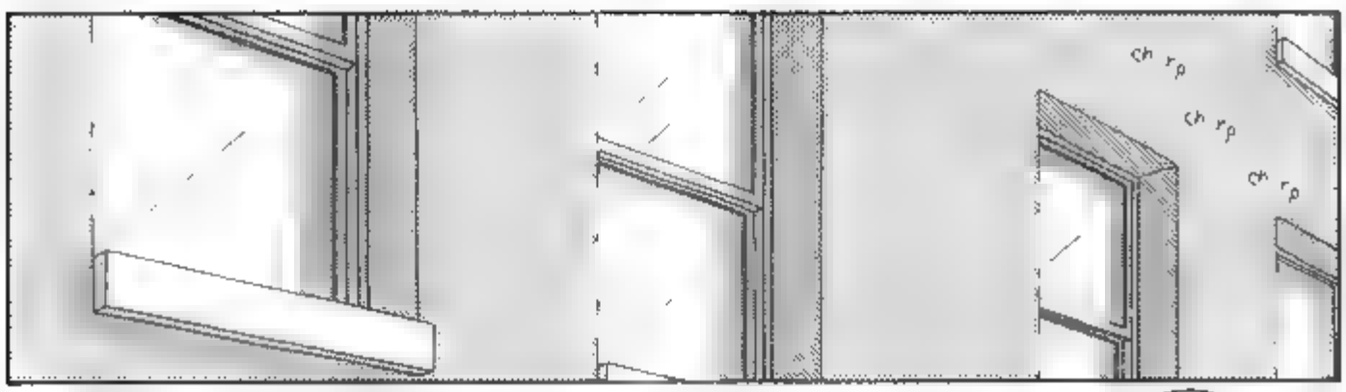

COME AND GET IT LATER.
THAT'S THE PLAN FOR TONIGHT, SO PLEASE DO WHATEVER YOU'D LIKE FOR DINNER. ALSO, SOME OF YOUR LAUNDRY WAS MIXED IN WITH MINE.
OH, I'M SORRY. IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.
KEITO!
YES?
I SEE. LISTEN, KEITO,
EVEN FOR YOUNG PEOPLE,
WEARING PANTIES THAT SMALL ISN'T GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH.
...
BUT IT'S THE TRUTH-- THAT ISN'T GOOD FOR YOU. YOU SHOULD KEEP YOUR STOMACH COVERED, ALL RIGHT?
RUI.
OH, I'M SORRY.
HUH?
BUSH

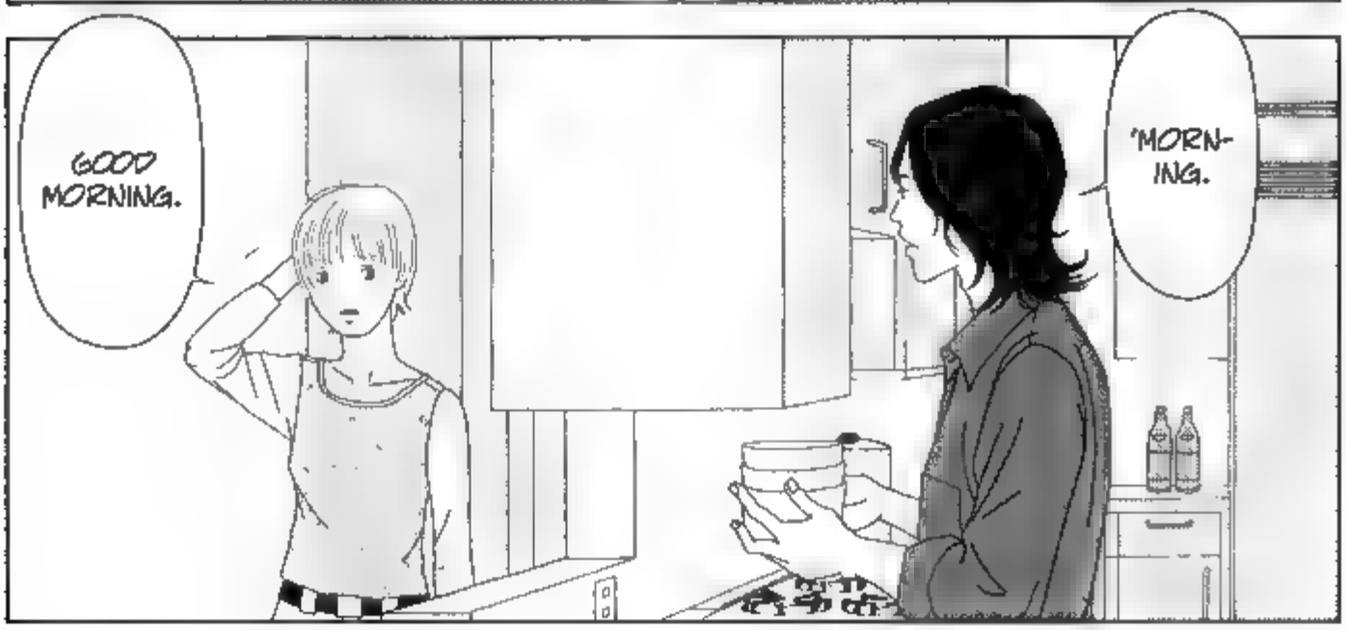
gah
gah
Oh
JOE'S RECORD SHOP
It's her
and stop at the store again today.
I pray that she'll come down the street
HI!
REALLY NICE OUT TODAY, ISN'T IT?
RECORD SHOP

flip
flip
flip
HEY! I'LL TAKE THIS, PLEASE.
HEY, SISTER!
OH!
KEITO, CUSTOMER.

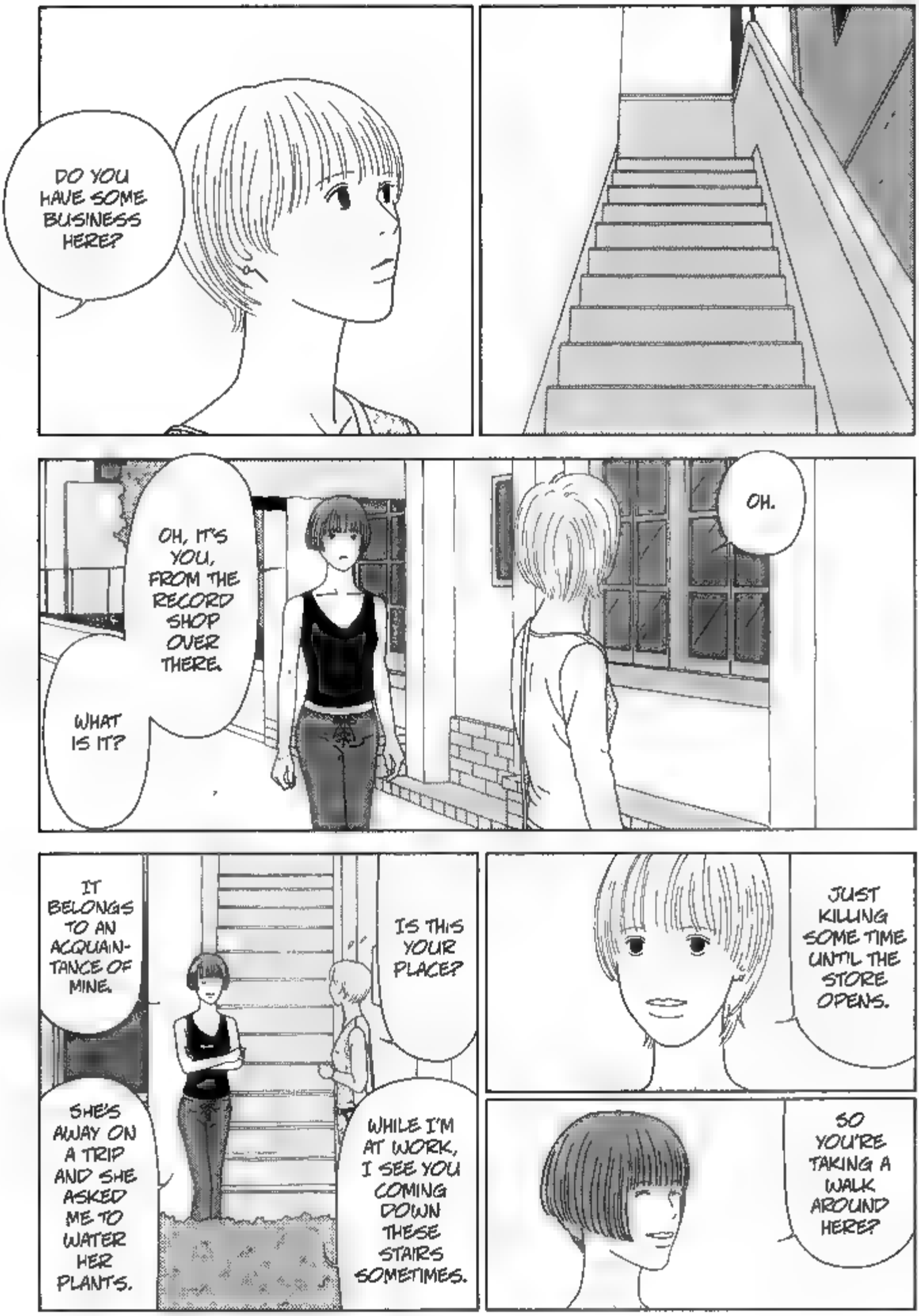
Dinner is over in the blink of an eye when you have it alone, isn't it?

The evening Rui and Sumihiko were away, I cooked dinner for myself for the first time in a long time and ate it in my room.





WHAT DID YOU MAKE?
OKAY.
UM, I USED SOME BACON, EGGS, AND CREAM LAST NIGHT.
HUNH.
SPA-GHETTI CAR-BONARA.
WHAT IS IT?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. GO CALL RUI.
HUH?
IF IT'S A FAVORITE OF YOURS, KEITO-SAN, I'LL ADD IT TO MY REP-ERTORY.


DO YOU HAVE SOME BUSINESS HERE?
OH.
OH, IT'S YOU, FROM THE RECORD SHOP OVER THERE.
WHAT IS IT?
JUST KILLING SOME TIME UNTIL THE STORE OPENS.
IS THIS YOUR PLACE?
IT BELONGS TO AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE.
SHE'S AWAY ON A TRIP AND SHE ASKED ME TO WATER HER PLANTS.
WHILE I'M AT WORK, I SEE YOU COMING DOWN THESE STAIRS SOMETIMES.
SO YOU'RE TAKING A WALK AROUND HERE?

YOU'RE SURE IT'S OKAY?
YOU COMING?
I'VE WONDERED THIS SINCE THE FIRST TIME I SAW YOU-- YOU HAVE A REALLY GREAT SENSE OF STYLE--
ARE YOU A MODEL?
pour
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU HAVE REALLY FIRM MUSCLES.
OH, OR MAYBE A DANCER?
DO YOU WORK OUT?

WHAT !?
OH, NO. NOT AT ALL!
HEY, DO YOU SPEND ALL OF YOUR TIME AT WORK
CHECKING OUT THE CUSTOMERS?
IT'S REALLY SOMETHING, A WHITE-SKINNED GIRL LIKE YOU
he he
WORKING FOR A RECORD SHOP THAT SPECIALIZES IN BLACK MUSIC.
YOUR LIPS ARE REALLY CUTE. CAN I TOUCH THEM?
SURE, I DON'T MIND.

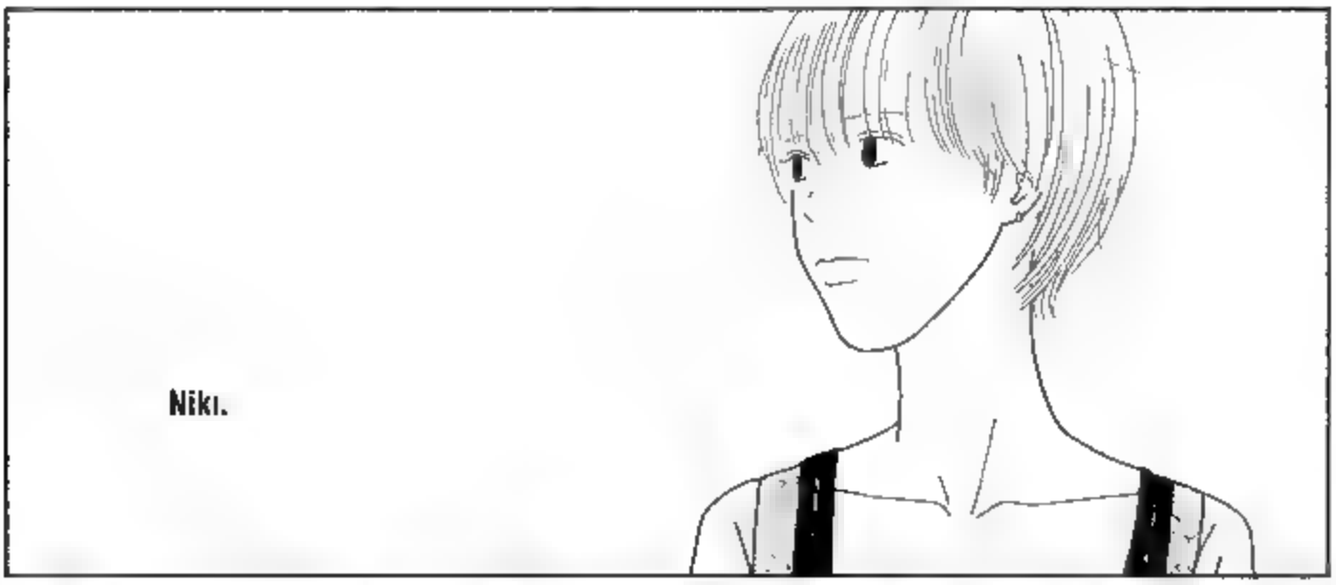
HM?
IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEANT, DO IT MORE.
HUH?
TOUCH THEM PROPERLY.
YEAH, TOUCH ME.
CAN I TOUCH YOU OTHER PLACES TOO?
TOUCH ME ALL OVER.
AH/E

* The word she uses here is "bian," which is one that lesbians use for themselves

I NORMALLY WOULDN'T DO THIS SORT OF THING WITH SOMEONE I JUST MET, YOU KNOW.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. WE JUST WENT WITH THE FLOW.
IS TEA ALL RIGHT?
YOU SOUND THIRSTY.
YES.
WHILE WE WERE TOUCHING EACH OTHER, WE BOTH DECIDED THAT WE WANTED TO DO IT. IT REALLY IS JUST A SIMPLE URGE.
THIS ISN'T LOVE.
HUH?
IT WASN'T LIKE THAT!
I LOVE YOU! THAT'S WHY I DID IT.

HUH?
I'M SORRY, IT LOOKS LIKE I'VE DONE YOU WRONG HERE. I APOLOGIZE.
I CAN'T GO OUT WITH YOU. SO...
I'M SORRY.
JOE'S RECORD SHOP
REAL BLACK MUSIC

* Niki gives her name here in Western order: given name followed by surname.


Niki.

She had this incred-
ible incomparable
fragrance to her.
There's
no way
in hell
I'll be able to
forget her.

Chapter 3 Rhythm and Blues

Angie. If I continue drawing only your face, that's not going to be enough to make up a manga.

I'll have to draw a lot of people who don't understand you.

In order to convey your loneliness to the readers,

She hasn't appeared again since then.

Oh, but I just can't draw manga right now. Ever since that day, Niki's been all I've been able to think about.

I KEEP TELLING MYSELF THAT I NEED TO START LOOKING FOR MY OWN PLACE ALREADY, START SUPPORTING MYSELF FOR ONCE, BUT I KEEP DRAGGING MY FEET.

I'M SORRY, RUI-SAN. WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT, I'VE BEEN RELYING ON YOU TOO MUCH.

DID YOU THINK I WAS ASKING YOU TO LEAVE?
WHAT A STRANGE GIRL YOU ARE.
OH, NO, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, KEITO?
I WAS JUST ASKING HOW THINGS ARE GOING WITH YOUR MOTHER.
YOU TWO HAVEN'T RECONCILED YET.
sip
FROM THE SOUND OF THINGS,
THOUGH I DON'T REALLY KNOW WHAT CAUSED OUR FIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE.
THAT'S RIGHT.
RUI IS THE ONE WHO ASKED YOU TO COME STAY HERE.
YOU SHOULD STAY AS LONG AS YOU'D LIKE. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IMPOSING.
I'D SAY: "LIKE HELL I KNOW WHAT IT IS!"
HUH?
IF IT WERE ME,
tap
COULD IT BE THAT SHE WANTS YOU TO KNOW WHAT THE PROBLEM IS WITHOUT BEING TOLD?

this group of three people who sit down and eat at the same table every day but aren't connected by blood...

Out of nowhere, sometimes I wonder what it is that we are—

YOU FELL FOR HER?
HEH
HEY, KEITO!
PLEASE TELL ME ABOUT HER. ALL I KNOW IS HER NAME.
AND THE WAYS THINGS ARE RIGHT NOW, I FEEL LIKE I'LL NEVER SEE HER AGAIN.
TO BE FRIENDS WITH HER.
HUH!? OH! I- I KINDA WANT
"THERE" ?
YOU'LL KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON IF YOU GO "THERE."

ARE YOU READY -?
ガタン!!

Niki!

She's

HUH?
KEITO?

THE TENCHOU OF JOE'S RECORD SHOP TOLD ME ABOUT IT.
YOU PLAY TRUMPET! I WAS SO SURPRISED!
YOU CAME TO THE PERFORMANCE? WAS IT JUST A COINCIDENCE?
MM. THIS IS A NICE BREEZE.
NIKI, COULD WE TALK SOMETIME? I WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOU,
AND TELL YOU MORE ABOUT ME.
DID YOU ENJOY THE PERFORMANCE?
YOU WERE REALLY COOL, NIKI!
OF COURSE! IT WAS REALLY COOKING!
SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING, NIKI.
WHAT DO YOU WANNA DO? WANNA CATCH A TAXI?
THIS IS MY CONTACT INFO--

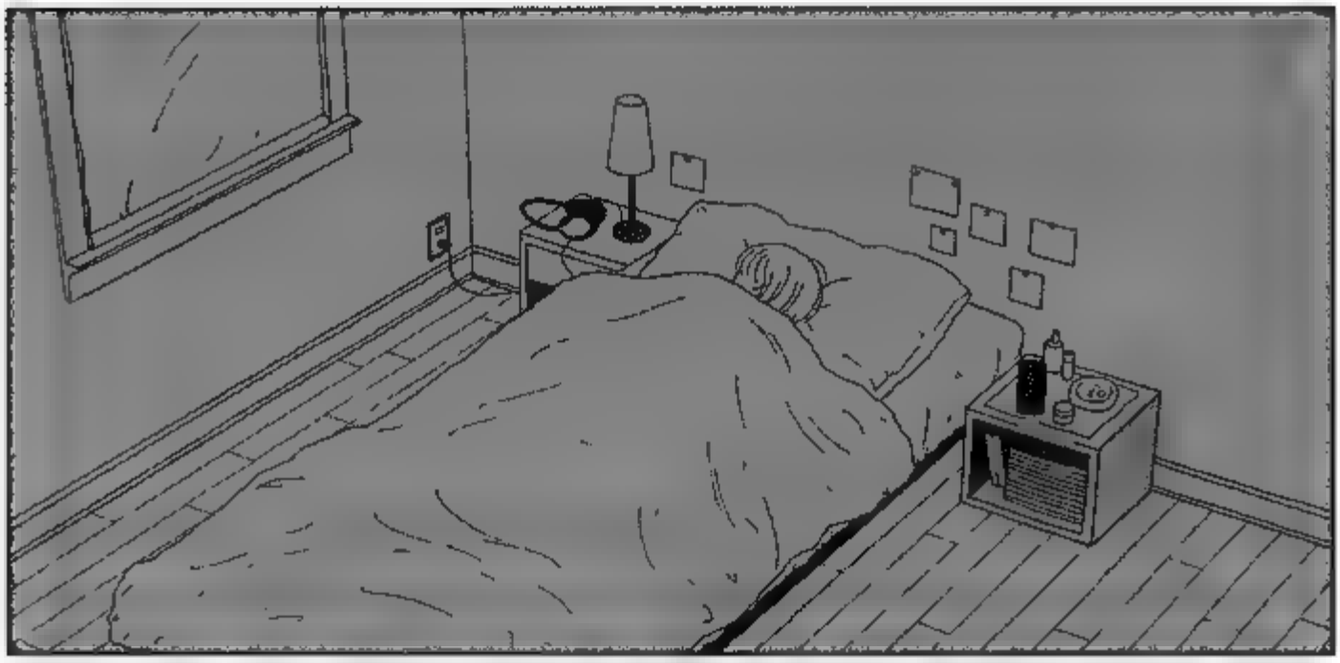
SORRY, BABY, BUT NIKI'S MY GIRL TONIGHT. PLEASE DON'T HOLD HER UP.
pull
PLEASE TAKE IT, NIKJ.
YOU A GROUPIE OF NIKI'S?
HM?
NIKI!
NIKJ.
YOU GET IT NOW, DON'T YOU?
I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU LOOKING AT ME WITH SAD EYES AGAIN.

YOU ALONE ?
I WAS JUST ABOUT TO LEAVE.
THEN I'LL SEE YOU HOME.

HUH?
I'LL GO HOME ON MY OWN.
PLEASE JUST LEAVE ME ALONE.
ARE YOU SURE THAT'S ALL RIGHT? AREN'T YOU TRYING TO PICK SOMEONE UP TONIGHT, SUMIHIKO-SAN?
HUH?
LET'S TAKE A BREAK FOR A BIT.
WHY DO I ALWAYS
FALL FOR COMPLETELY IRRESPON-SIBLE PEOPLE?
YOU'LL FEEL CALMER ONCE YOU'VE HAD SOME COFFEE.

THERE ARE VERY FEW PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO LOOK INTO SOMEONE'S BACKGROUND BEFORE THEY GO AHEAD AND FALL IN LOVE WITH THEM.
THAT HAPPENS TO EVERY-ONE.
I DON'T REALLY THINK YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THE FEELINGS OF SOMEONE LIKE ME, SOMEONE WHO HAS TROUBLE FINDING A SWEETHEART.
ATTRACTIVE PEOPLE LIKE YOU HAVE NO PROBLEM FINDING PEOPLE, SUMIHIKO-SAN.
EVEN IF A HUNDRED WOMEN CAME AFTER ME, IF THE ONE I LOVED WASN'T ONE OF THEM,
IT WOULDN'T MAKE ME HAPPY.

I'M SURE YOU COULD FIND ONE WHO WOULD MAKE YOU HAPPY!
OUT OF A HUNDRED PEOPLE,
THERE'S NOTHING FOR YOU TO BE JEALOUS OF.
Hehe
I SEE.
BUT YOU'D BE COLD WITHOUT IT.
HUH?
I'M FINE.
The wind was blowing from Kumiko's direction.
Suddenly, I realized that a pleasant fragrance was in the air.



Niki.
A trumpeter in a funk band.

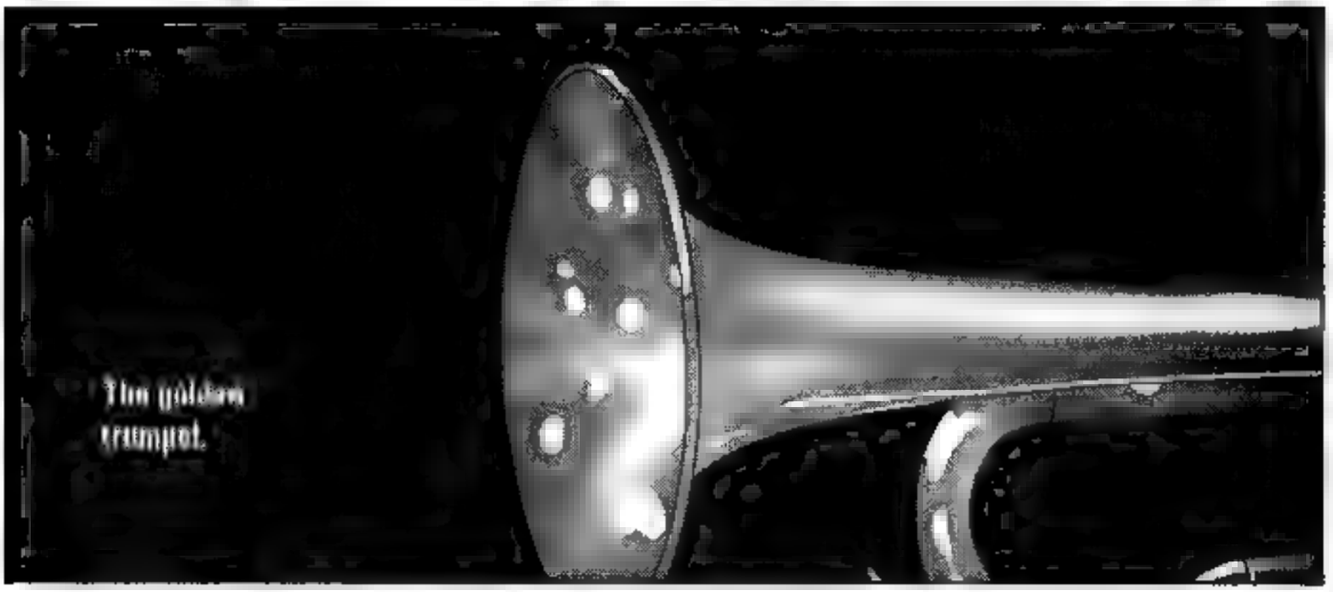
turned out not to be a lesbian.

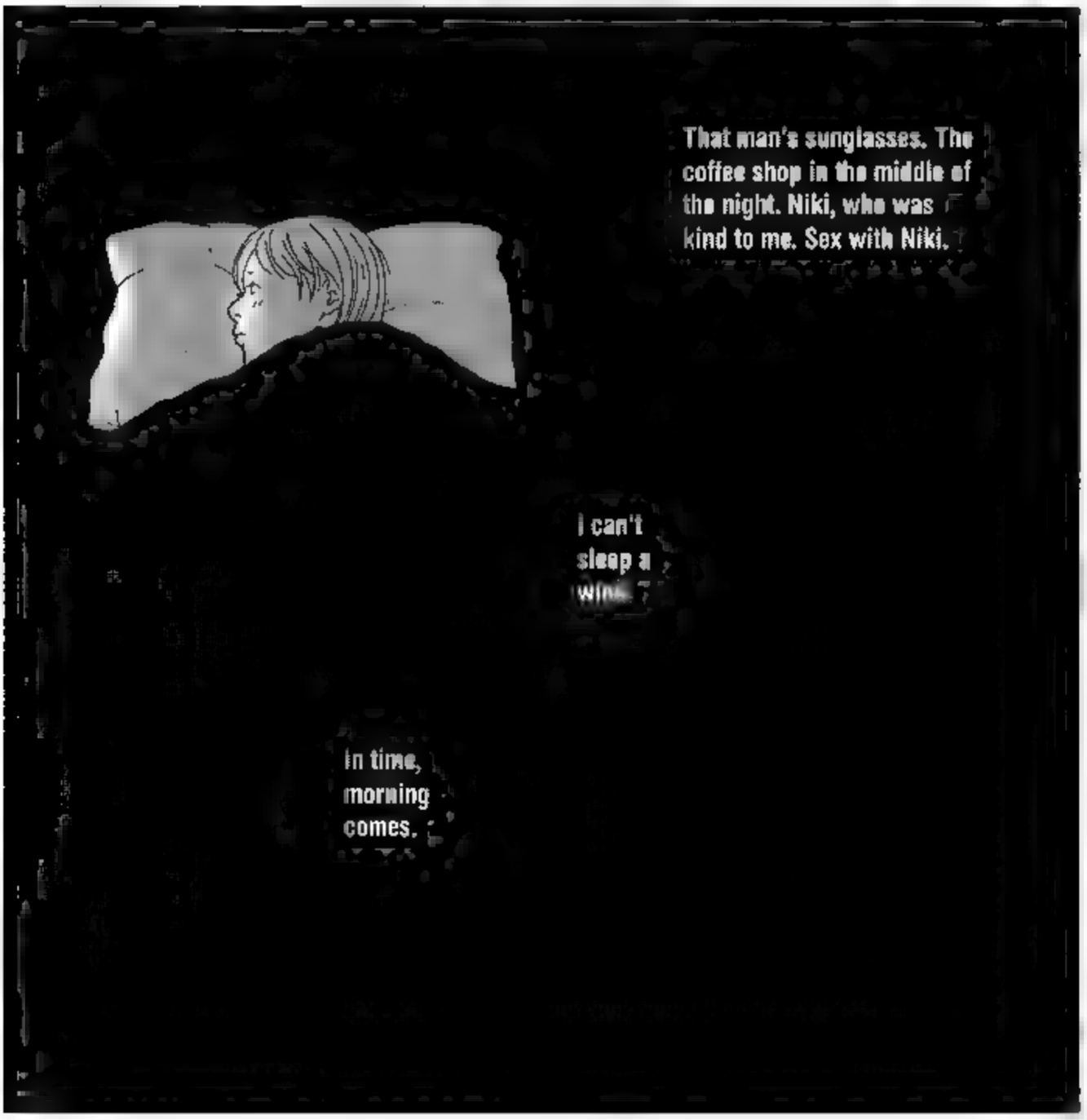
She

That
was

casual
sex.
She just did
it because
she was in
the mood.

She's with
that man
right now,
and I'm
not in her
thoughts
at all.


The golden trumpet.


That man's sunglasses. The coffee shop in the middle of the night. Niki, who was kind to me. Sex with Niki.
I can't sleep a wink.
In time, morning comes.

Chapter 4 Mom

Angie.

As you're singing in the street, some creepy white guy comes up to you and starts to pick a fight.

I came up with that plot idea.

Ah, I want to finish the manga soon.

Mom teaches patchwork classes at the culture center on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and she always leaves the door unlocked.

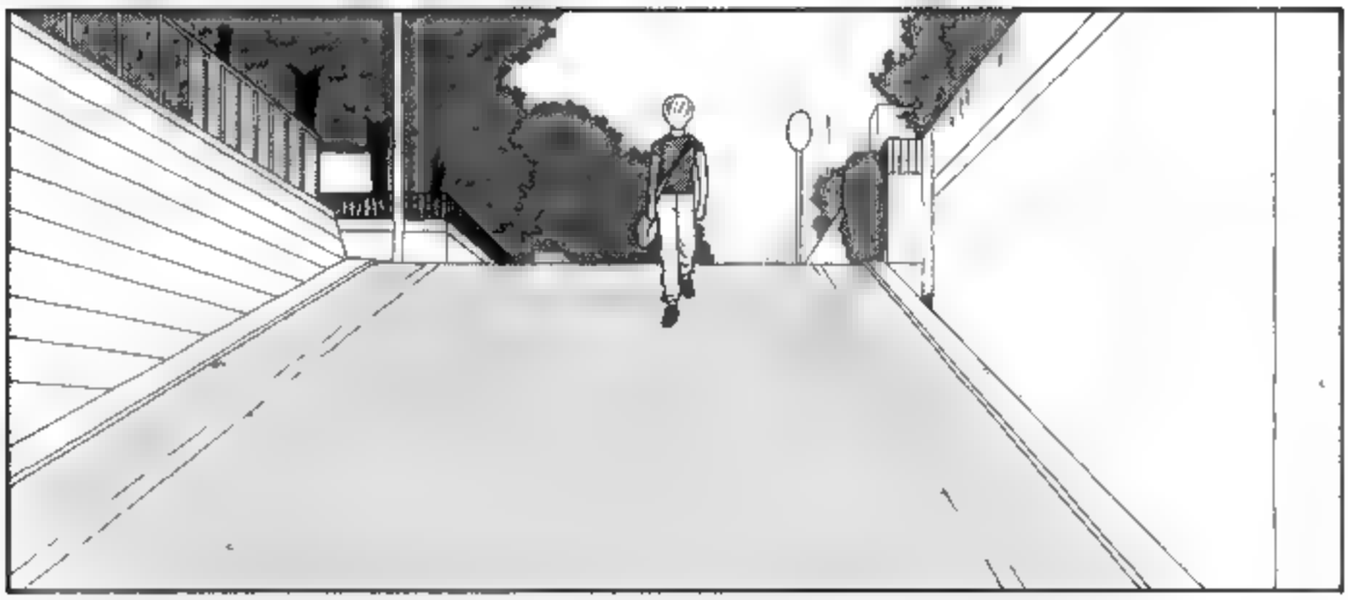
ever since I left my parents' house, I've been sneaking back in for stuff. I've done it a bunch of times.

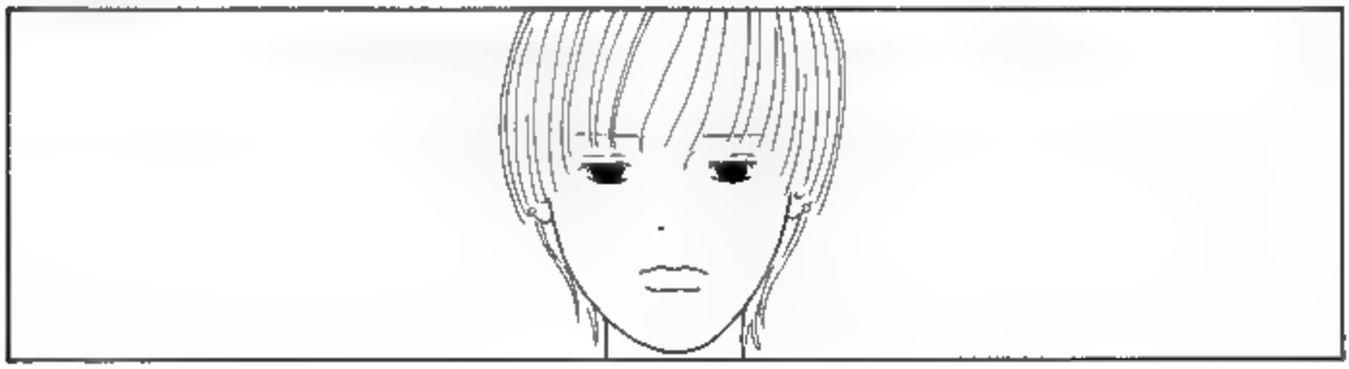
By the way,

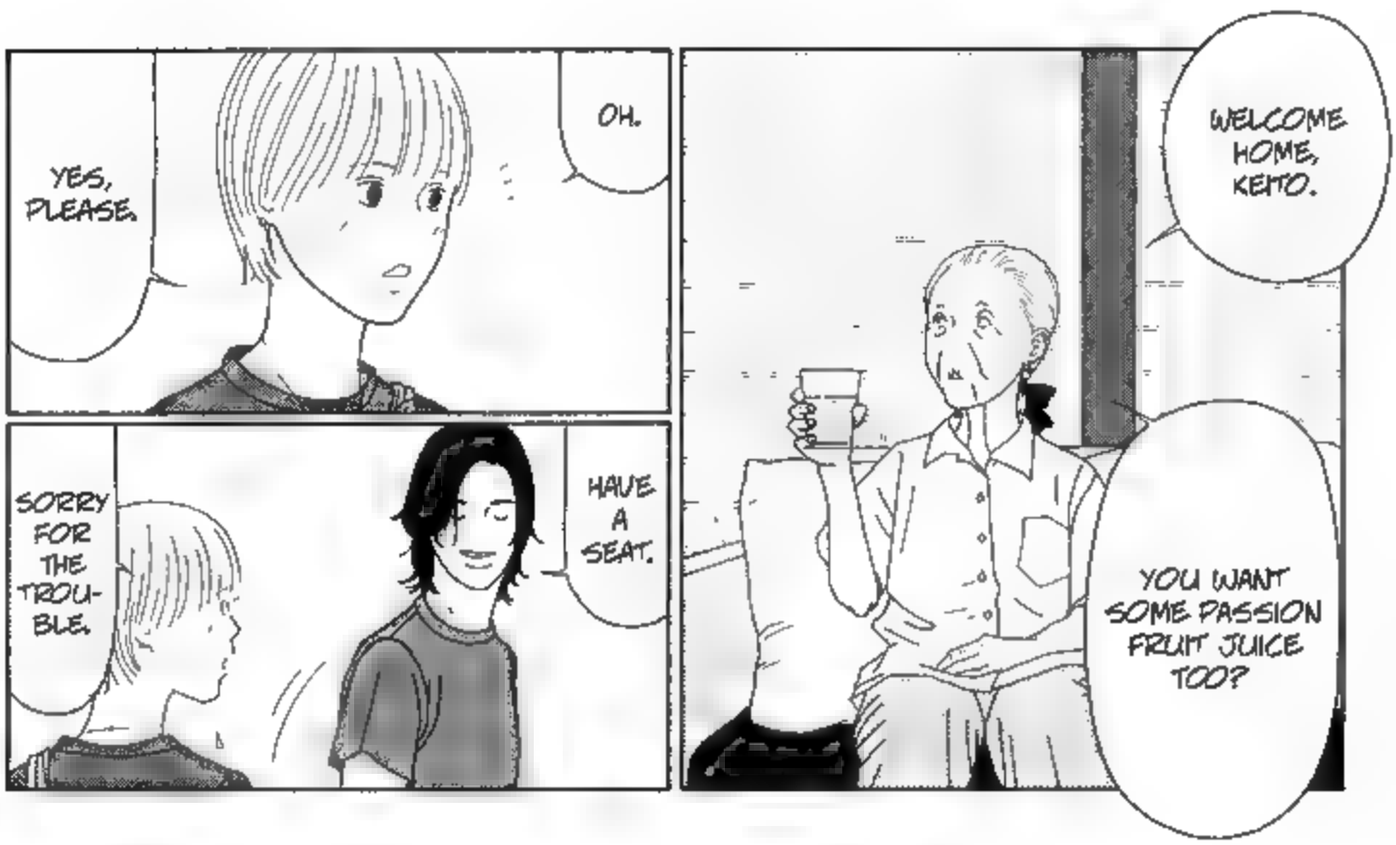
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, SNEAKING AROUND LIKE THIS?
THERE'S NO WAY IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PUT AWAY IN A DRAWER EITHER.
TODAY'S THE FIFTH TUESDAY OF THE MONTH, SO I HAVE IT OFF.
WHAT HAP-PENED TO YOUR CLASS?
I THOUGHT THAT YOU WERE A BURGLAR.
WHY ARE YOU HERE?
MOM!
WHEN YOU FED ME LINES AND TOOK OFF BEFORE?
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S PATHETIC OF YOU TO BE SNEAKING BACK IN HERE FOR YOUR THINGS,

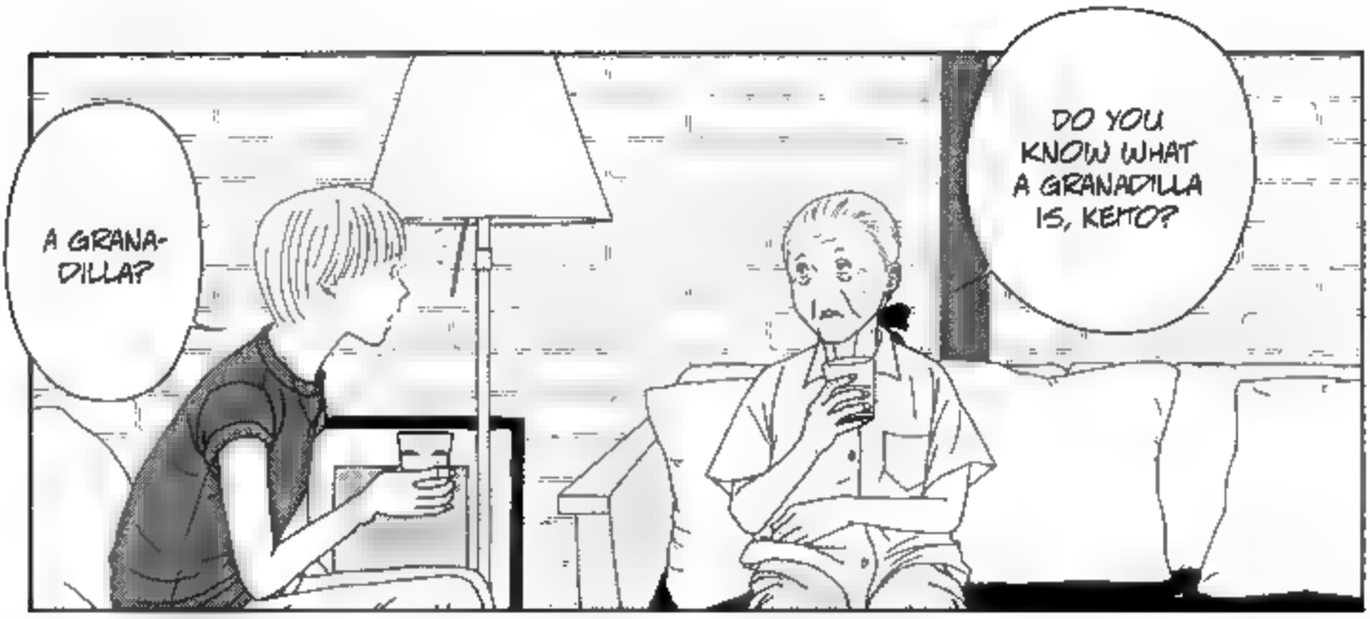
WHO WOULD LISTEN TO SOMEONE LIKE YOU?
THERE ARE ALL SORTS OF PEOPLE IN THE WORLD.
AND THERE ARE PLENTY OF GAY PEOPLE OUT THERE.
YES, I AM PATHETIC. YOU'RE ALWAYS RIGHT, MOM.
BUT YOU'RE OUT OF TOUCH WITH REALITY HERE.
DON'T RUN AWAY FROM THIS.
THAT'S NOT FAIR.
YOU'RE MORE THAN I CAN HANDLE RIGHT NOW, SO JUST DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
THAT'S WHY I TOLD YOU JUST TO DO AS YOU PLEASE.

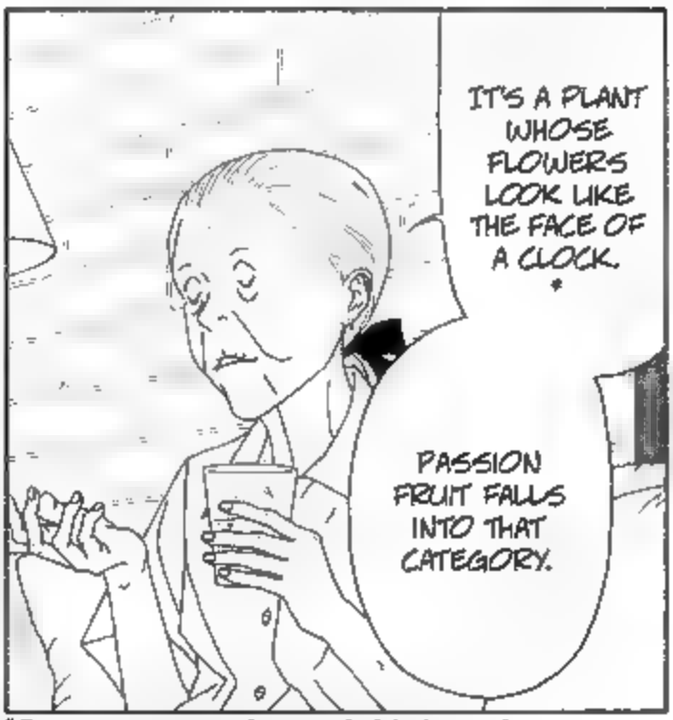
I'VE TOLD YOU A THOUSAND TIMES-- I CAN'T IMAGINE HOMOSEXUALITY REALLY EXISTS. I DON'T EVEN WANT TO.
JUST THINKING ABOUT TWO WOMEN TOGETHER GIVES ME THE CREEPS.
NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY, EVERYONE ALWAYS ENDS UP GOING AWAY.
NONE OF THEM CAN LIVE LIFE NORMALLY, LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE.
IT LOOKS LIKE HIS BLOOD IS THICKER IN YOU.
NOBODY EVEN TRIES TO UNDER-STAND
MY SORROW.



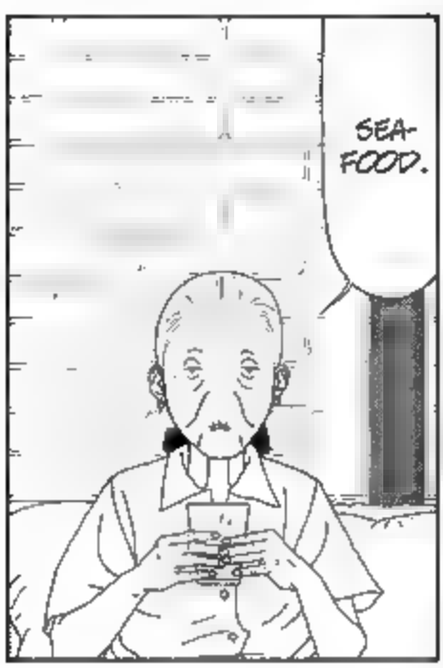


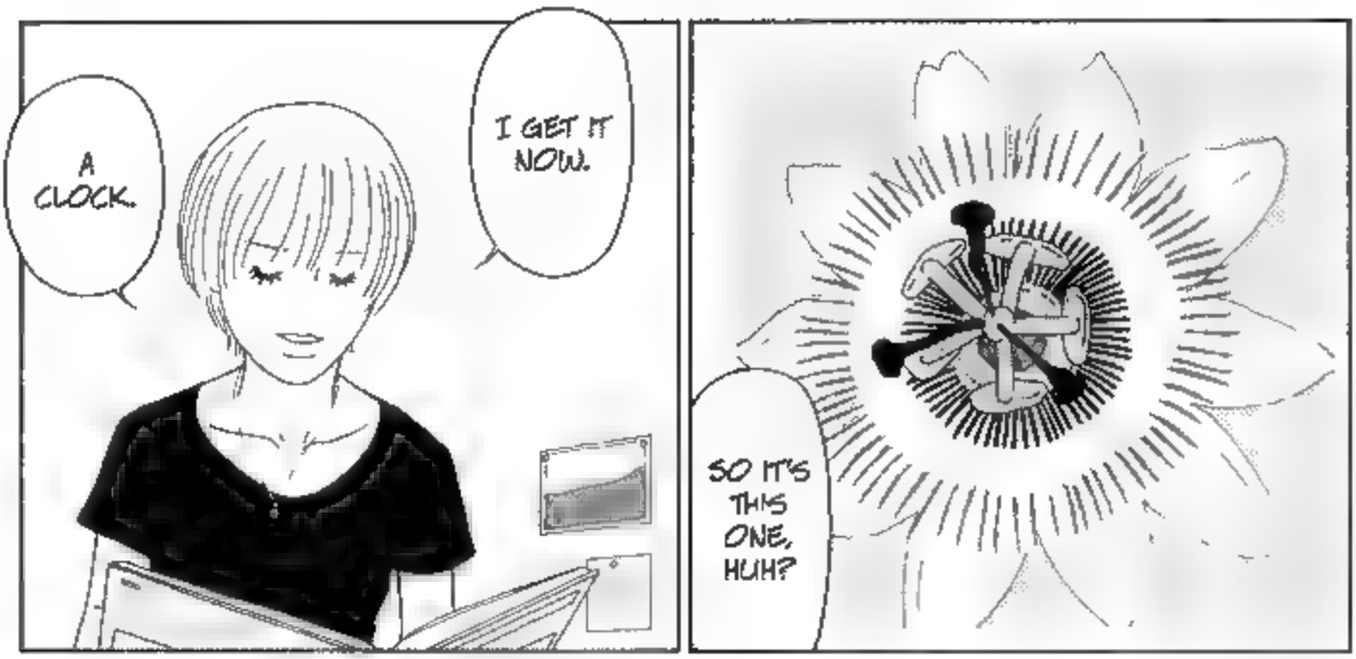

WELCOME HOME, KEITO.
YOU WANT SOME PASSION FRUIT JUICE TOO?
OH.
YES, PLEASE.
HAVE A SEAT.
SORRY FOR THE TROU-BLE.





* The Japanese name is "tokeisou" "clock grass."



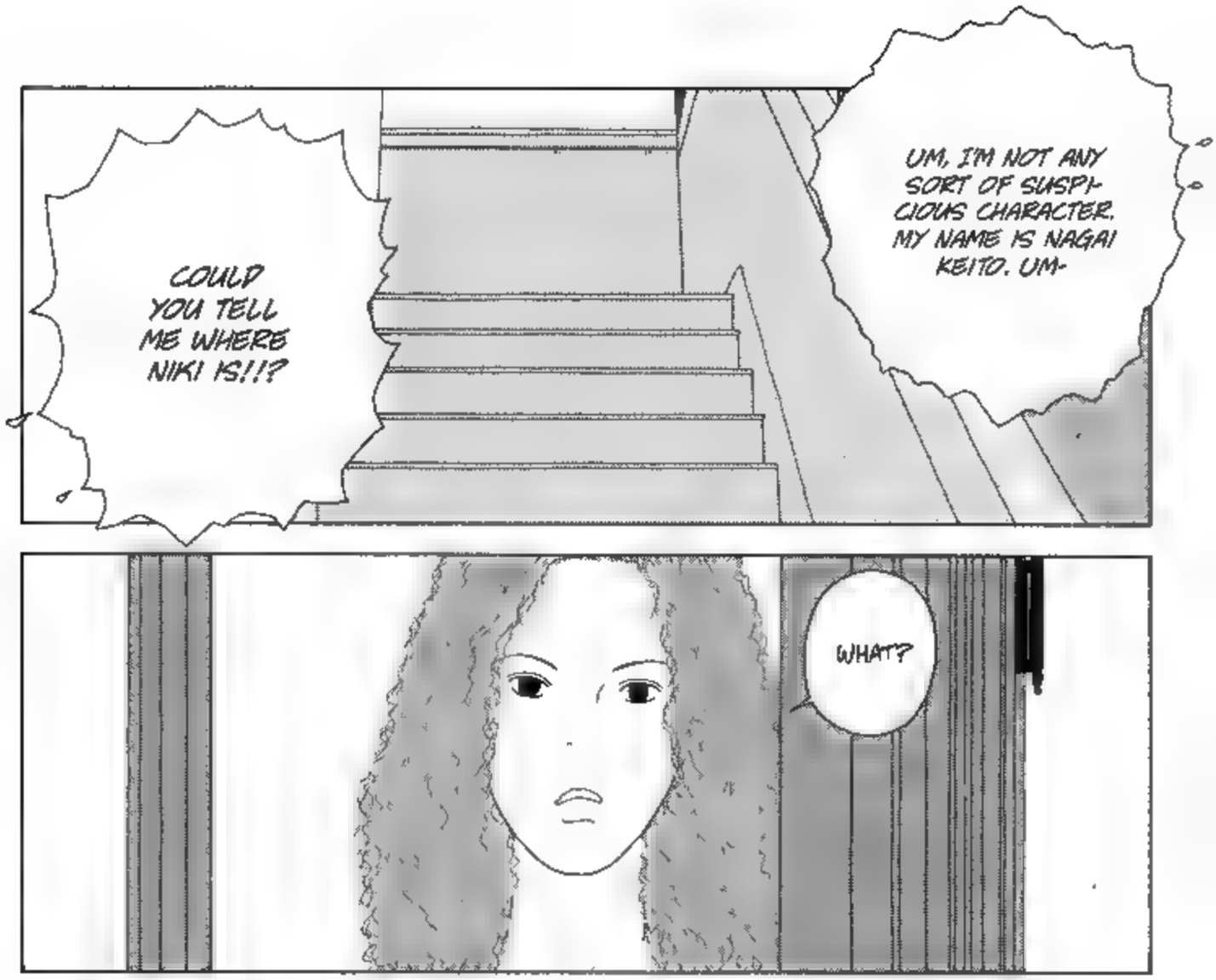


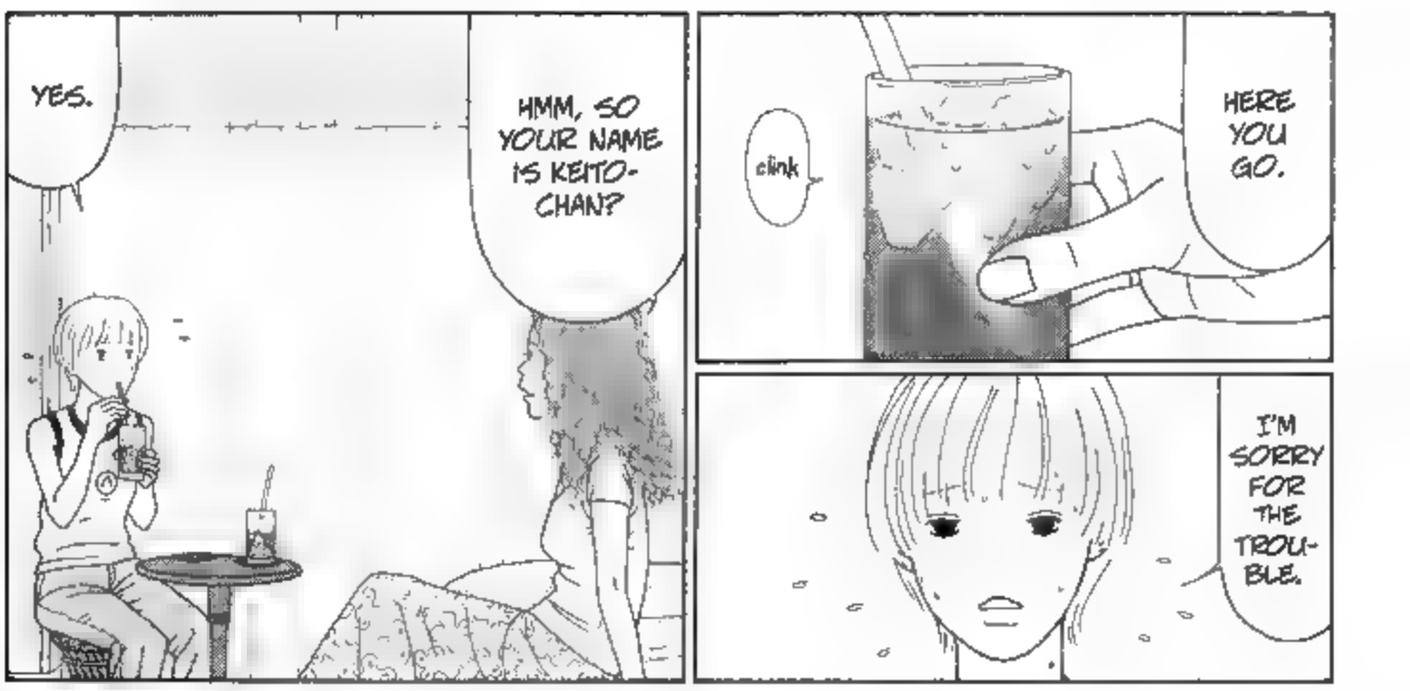
I think there's a real variety of flowers out there.

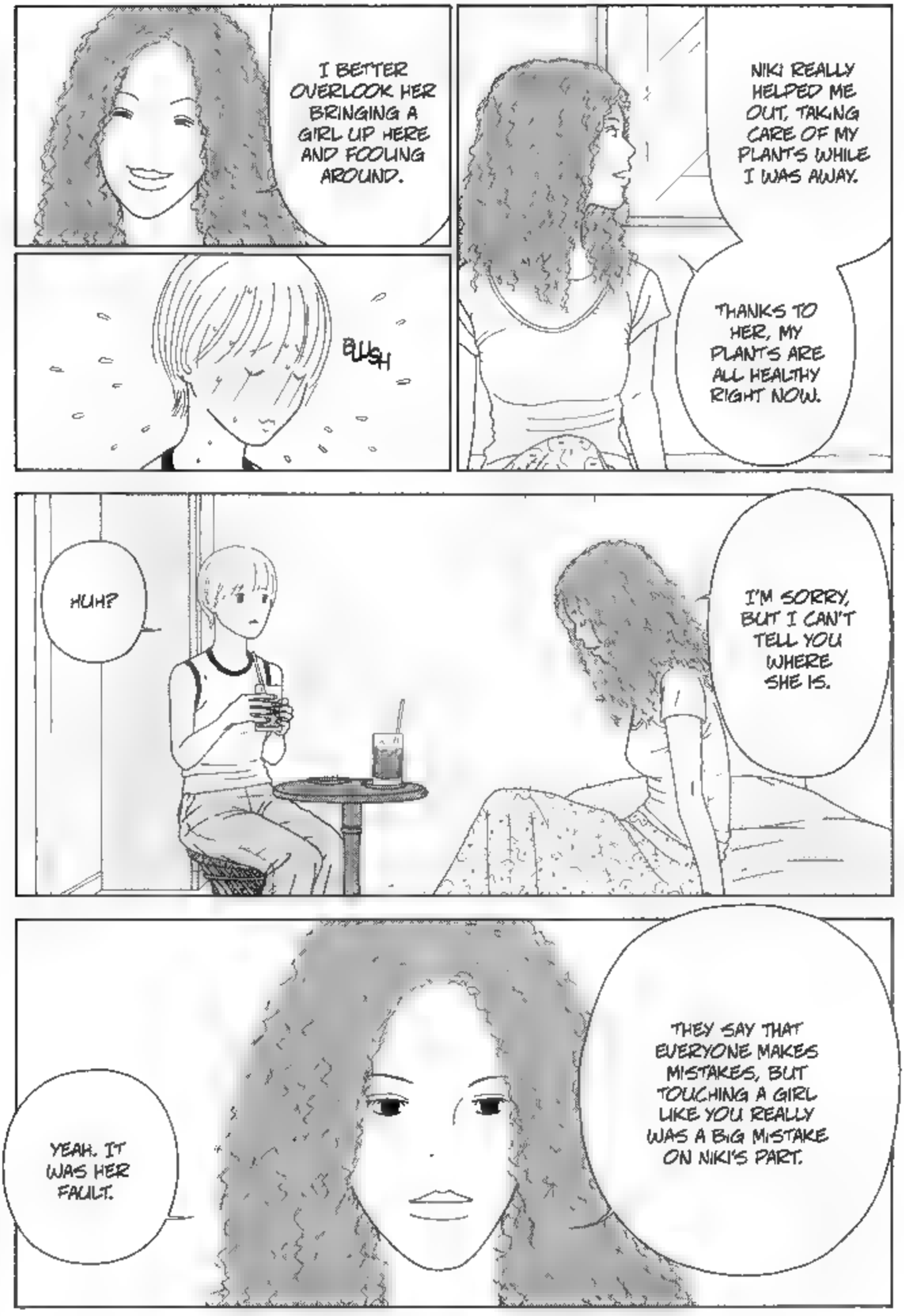
I'm going to look through the book for a while.

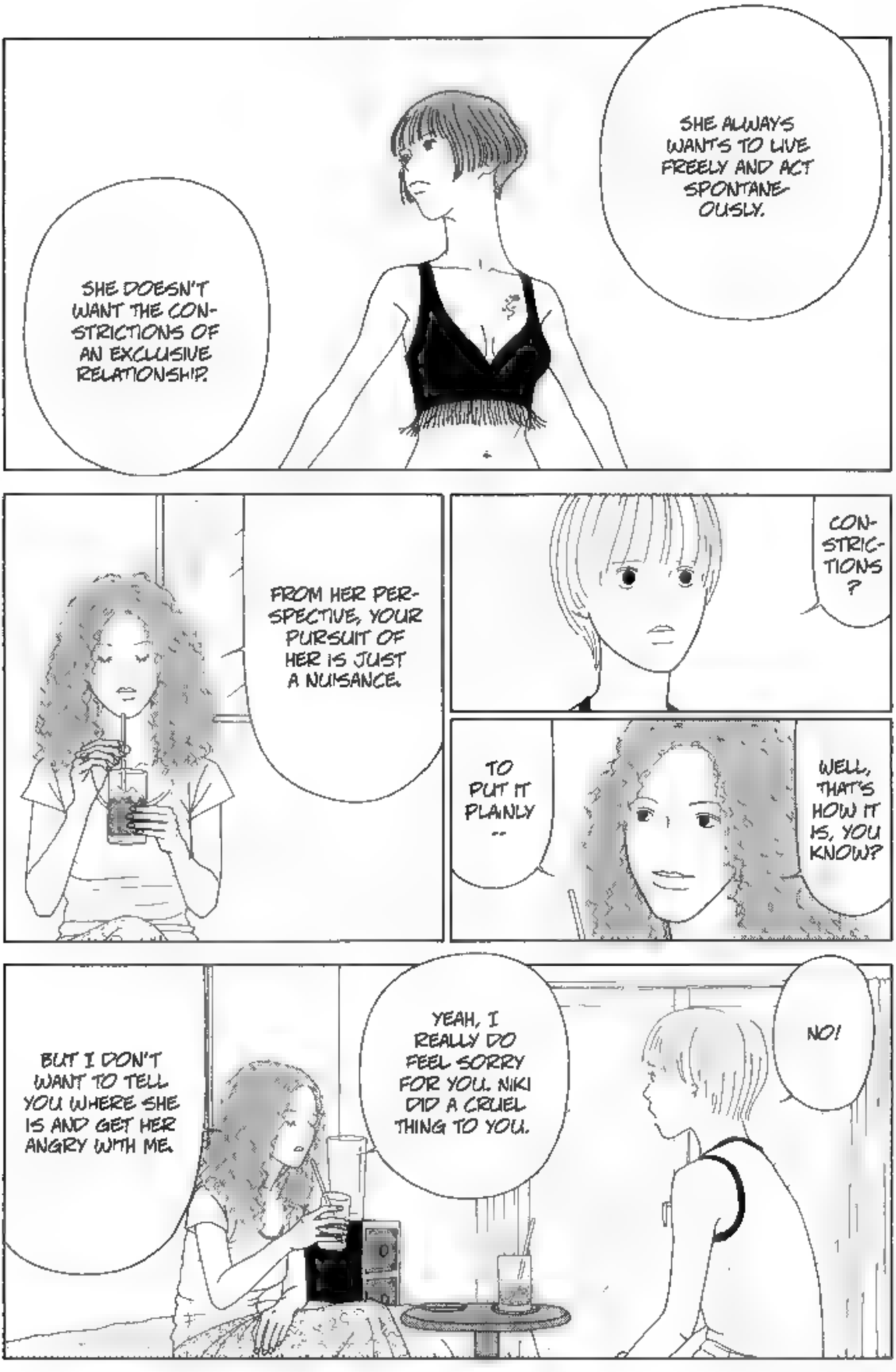
* Around 5.15 in US dollars.

to see the funk band again, but I didn't get to speak to Niki.
And it looks like they don't have another performance planned anytime soon.—
RIGHT!
OH!
I don't have any way of seeing Niki again.
ding dong ding dong
click
WHO IS IT?

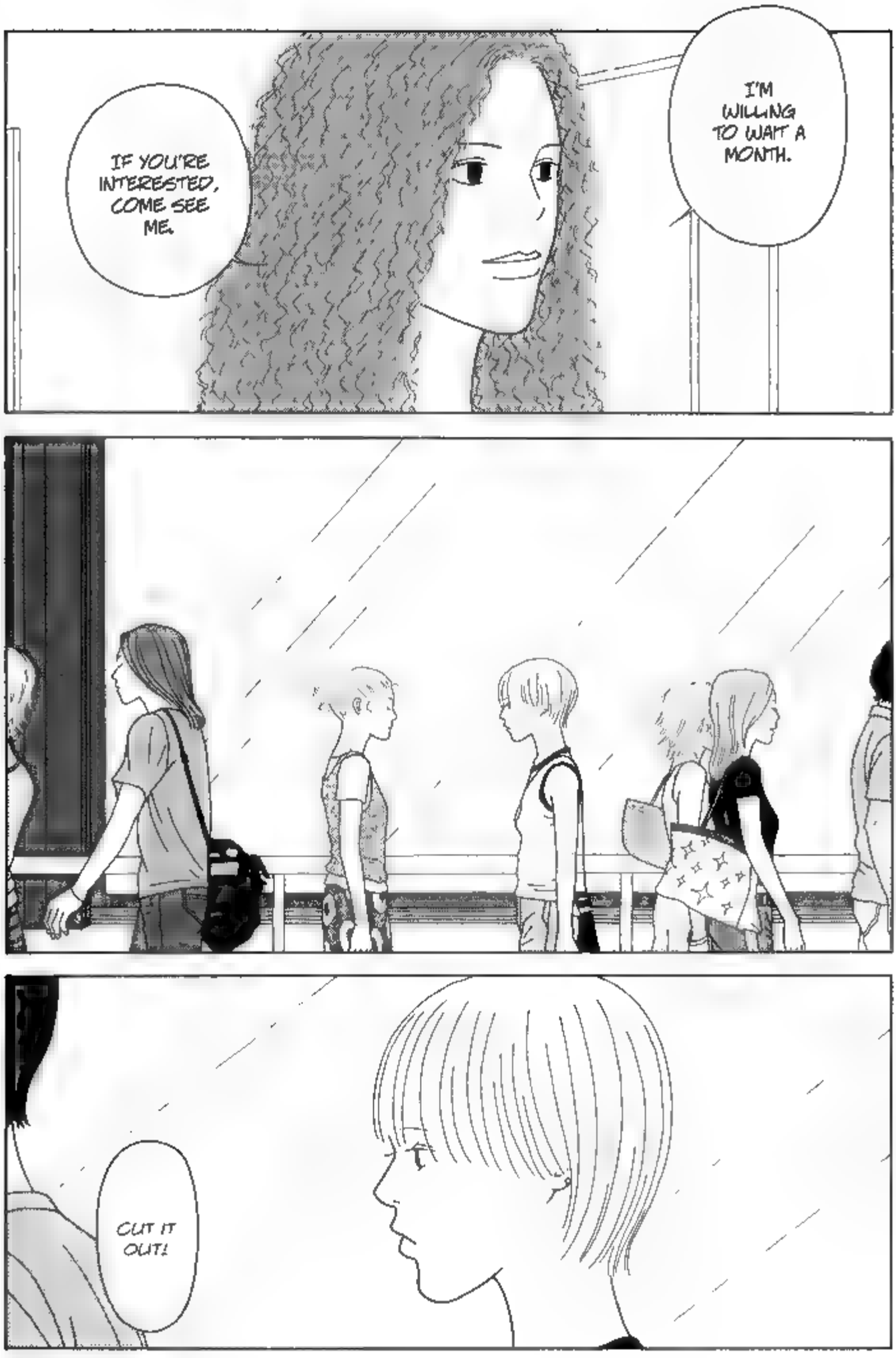

COULD YOU TELL ME WHERE NIKI IS!!?
UM, I'M NOT ANY SORT OF SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER. MY NAME IS NAGAI KEITO. UM-
WHAT?

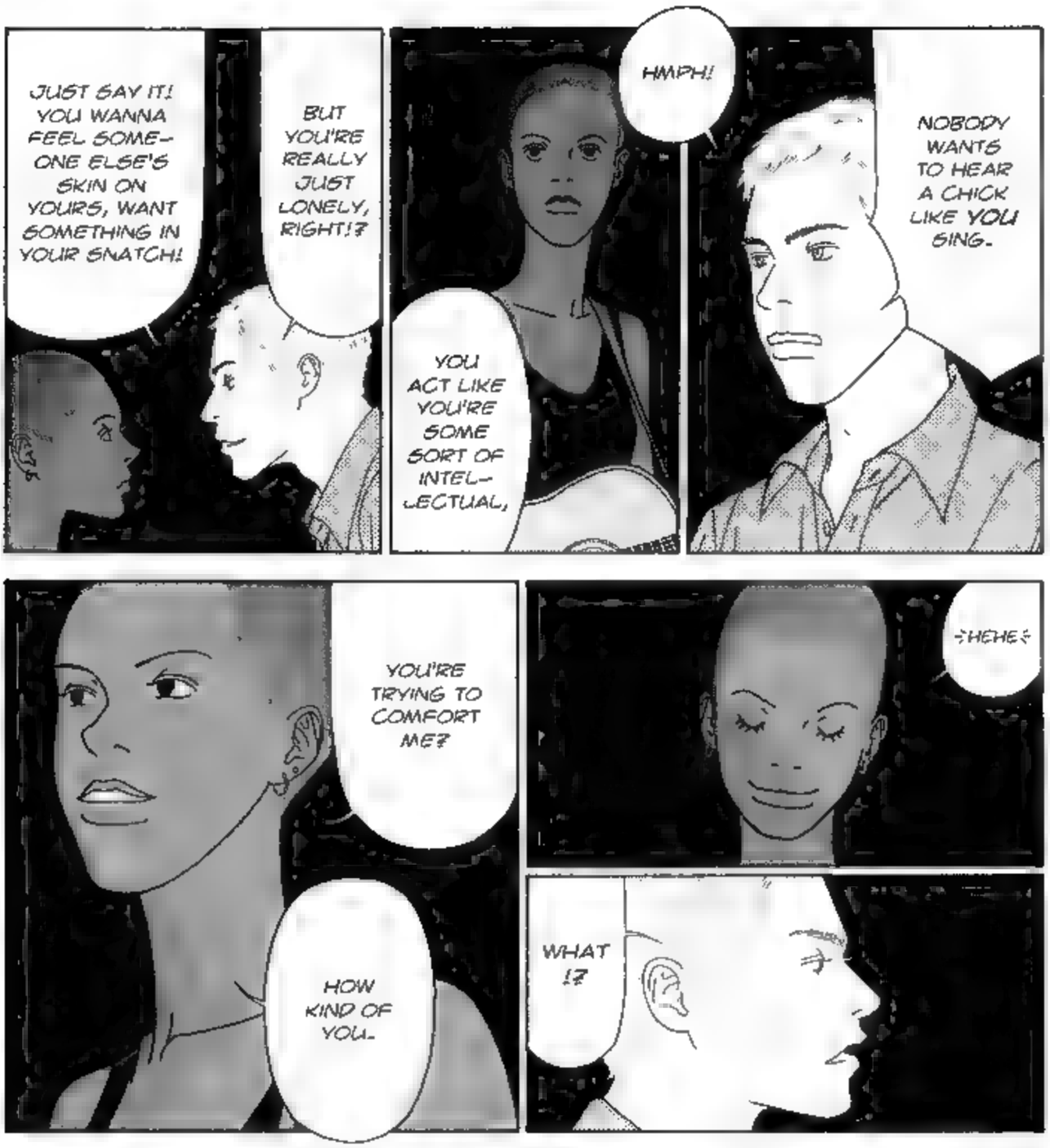

YES.
HMM, SO YOUR NAME IS KEITO-CHAN?
clink
HERE YOU GO.
I'M SORRY FOR THE TROUBLE.


I BETTER OVERLOOK HER BRINGING A GIRL UP HERE AND FOOLING AROUND.
BUSH
NIKI REALLY HELPED ME OUT, TAKING CARE OF MY PLANTS WHILE I WAS AWAY.
THANKS TO HER, MY PLANTS ARE ALL HEALTHY RIGHT NOW.
HUH?
I'M SORRY, BUT I CAN'T TELL YOU WHERE SHE IS.
YEAH. IT WAS HER FAULT.
THEY SAY THAT EVERYONE MAKES MISTAKES, BUT TOUCHING A GIRL LIKE YOU REALLY WAS A BIG MISTAKE ON NIKI'S PART.

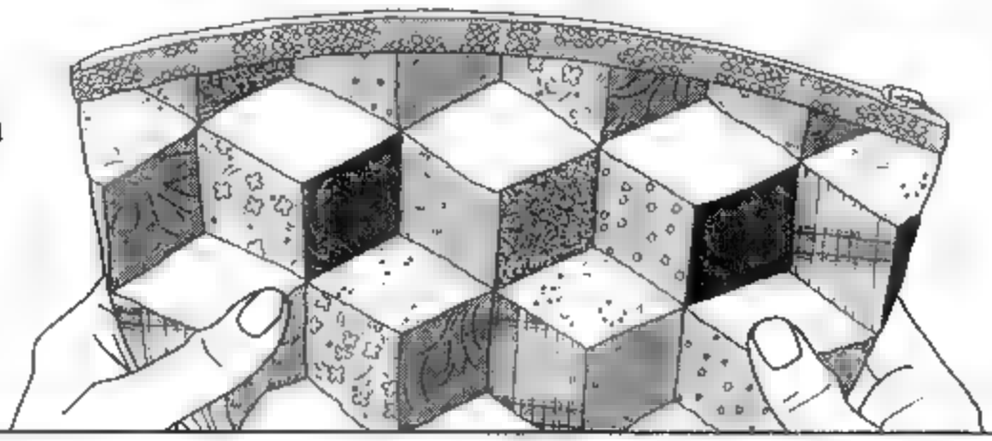

SHE ALWAYS WANTS TO LIVE FREELY AND ACT SPONTANEOUSLY.
SHE DOESN'T WANT THE CONSTRICTIONS OF AN EXCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIP.
FROM HER PERSPECTIVE, YOUR PURSUIT OF HER IS JUST A NUISANCE.
CONSTRICTIONS?
TO PUT IT PLAINLY --
WELL, THAT'S HOW IT IS, YOU KNOW?
BUT I DON'T WANT TO TELL YOU WHERE SHE IS AND GET HER ANGRY WITH ME.
YEAH, I REALLY DO FEEL SORRY FOR YOU. NIKI DID A CRUEL THING TO YOU.
NO!

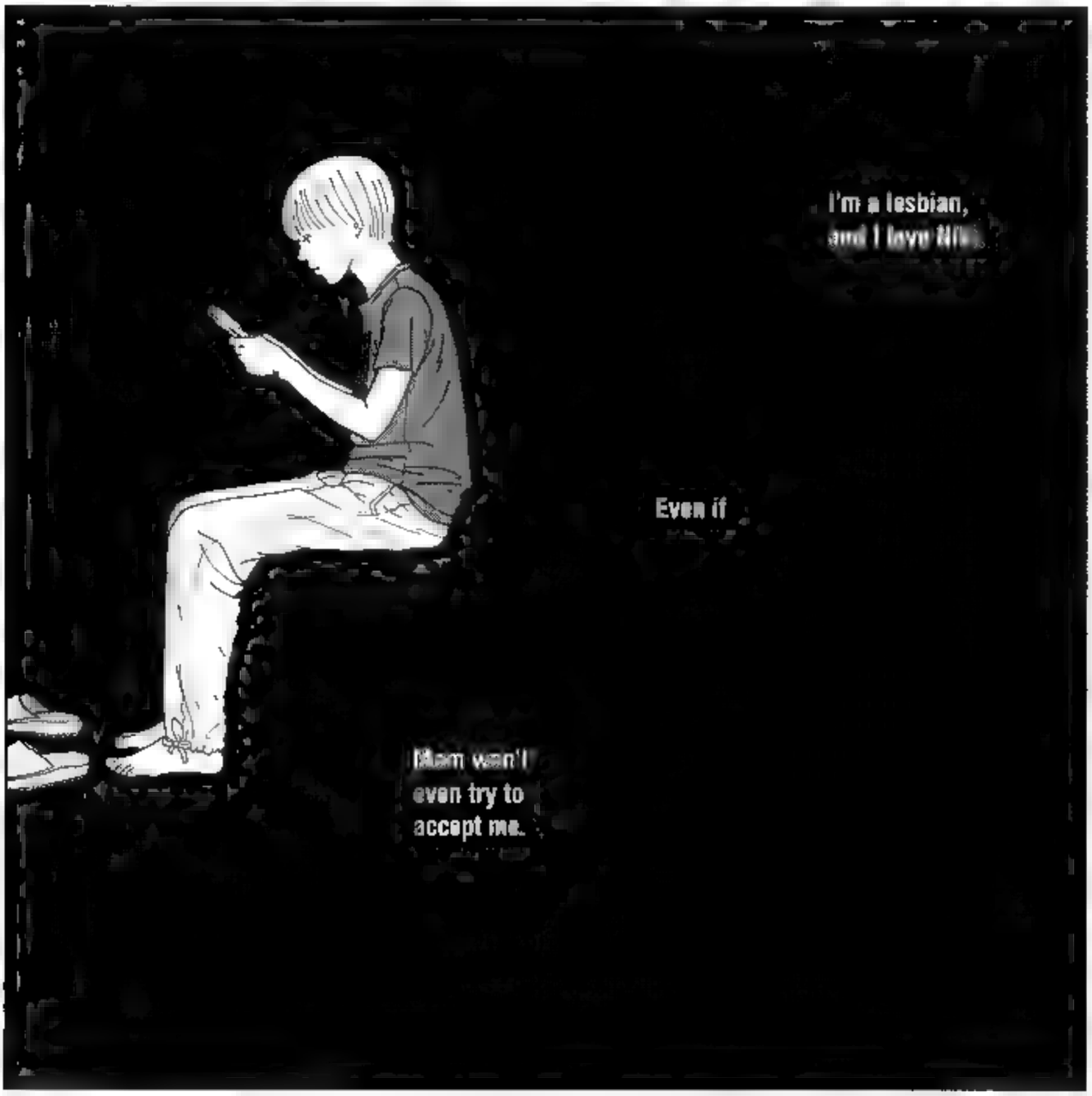
YEAH.
clink
BUT I CAME HERE BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU WERE MY LAST HOPE...
KEITO-CHAN.
HUH?
I CAN'T BECOME NIKI FOR YOU, THOUGH.
I'M A REAL LESBIAN AND I CHERISH MY GIRLFRIENDS, IF I DO SAY SO MYSELF.
IS IT NIKI IN PARTICULAR THAT YOU WANT, OR JUST A GIRLFRIEND IN GENERAL?

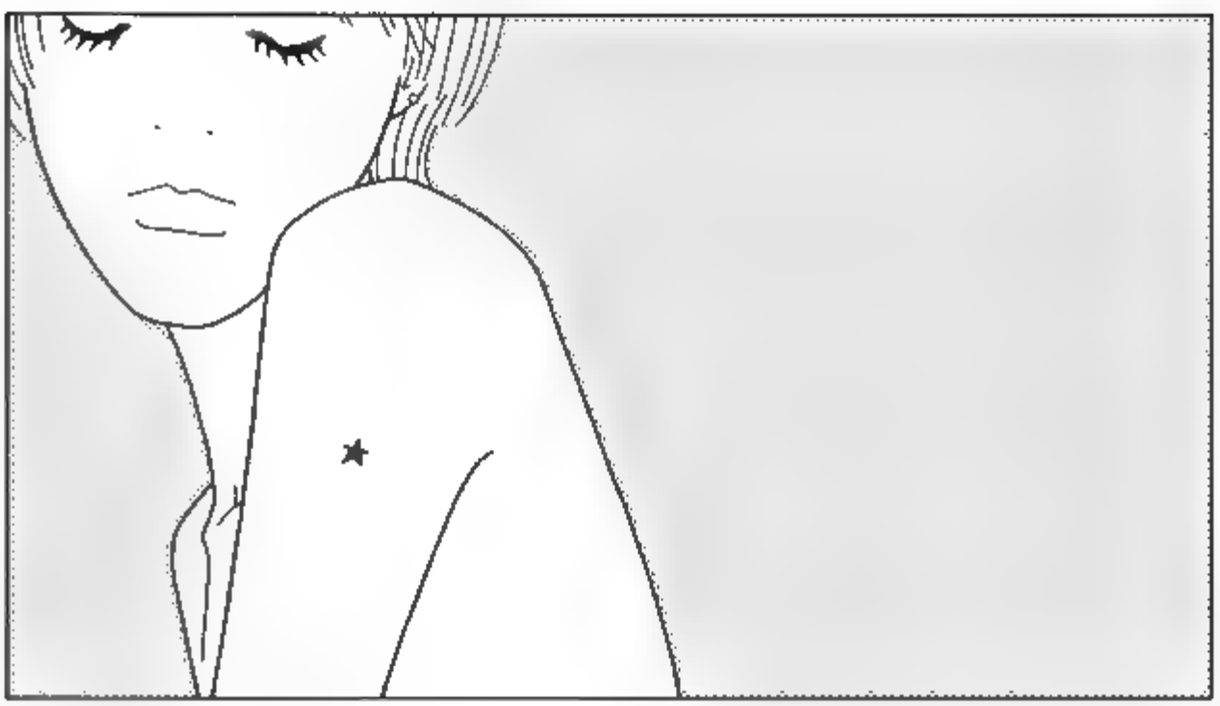

I'M WILLING TO WAIT A MONTH.
IF YOU'RE INTERESTED, COME SEE ME.
CUT IT OUT!


JUST SAY IT! YOU WANNA FEEL SOME-ONE ELSE'S SKIN ON YOURS, WANT SOMETHING IN YOUR SNATCH!
BUT YOU'RE REALLY JUST LONELY, RIGHT!?
HMPH!
YOU ACT LIKE YOU'RE SOME SORT OF INTEL-LECTUAL,
NOBODY WANTS TO HEAR A CHICK LIKE YOU SING.
YOU'RE TRYING TO COMFORT ME?
HOW KIND OF YOU.
:HEHE:
WHAT !?
I just don't feel like drawing it at all.
Oh, I guess I should get rid of this story-line after all.

I brought a pouch [redacted] made with me.

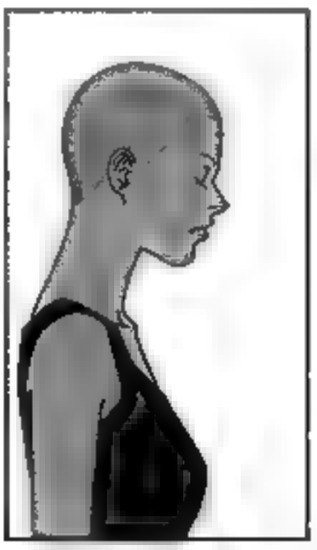






Chapter 5 Mihoko

Angie. I'm back to square one with your manga.



All the ideas I've been working on just sound boring now.

I'm not sure what I want to express or how I want to do it.

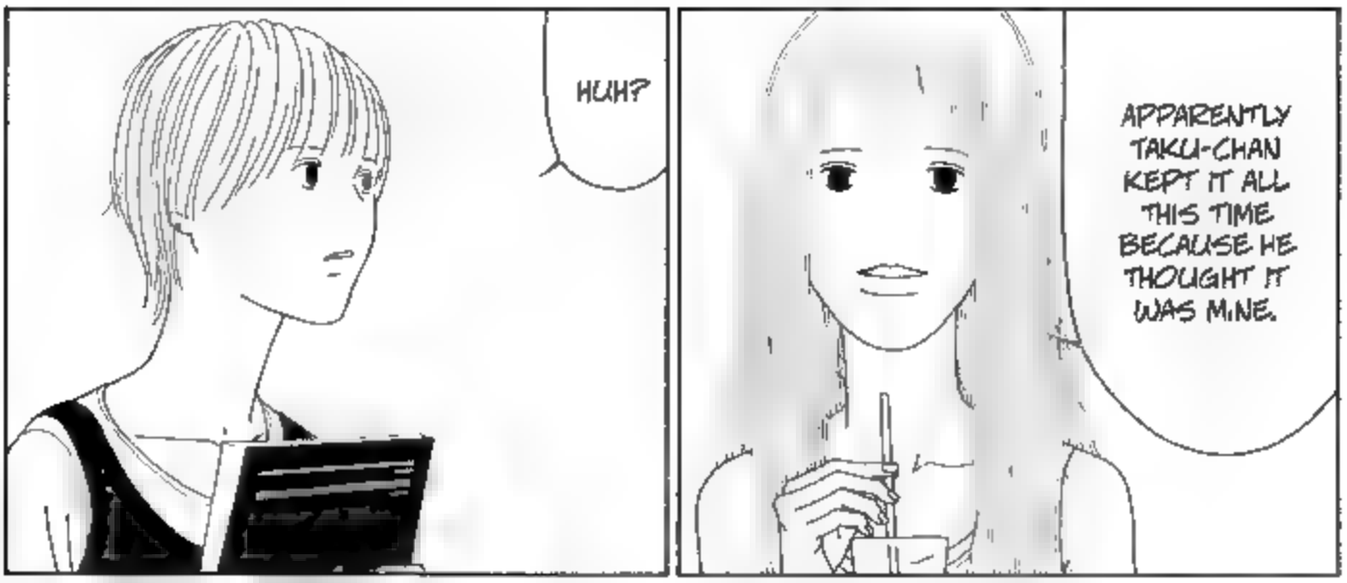
Niki might already be thinking of me as just someone she used to know.

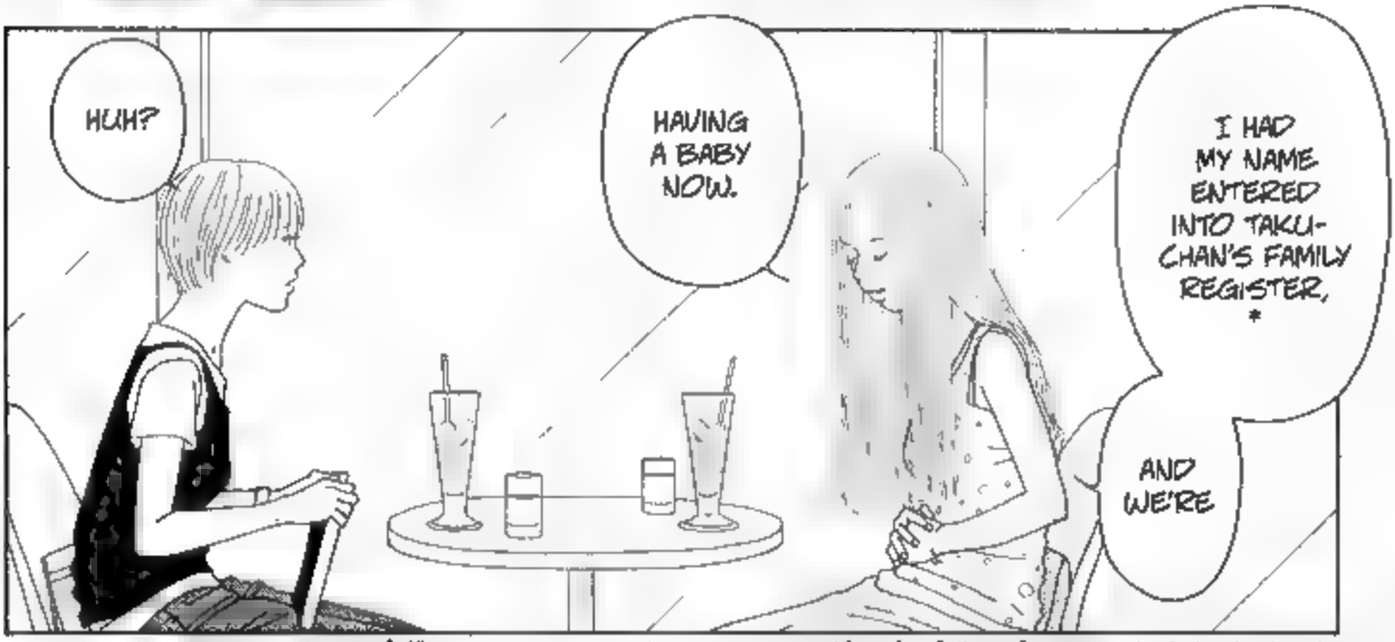
It feels like Niki is going to be reduced to a mere memory soon, and I can't stand it. I'm scared.

But that's not all.

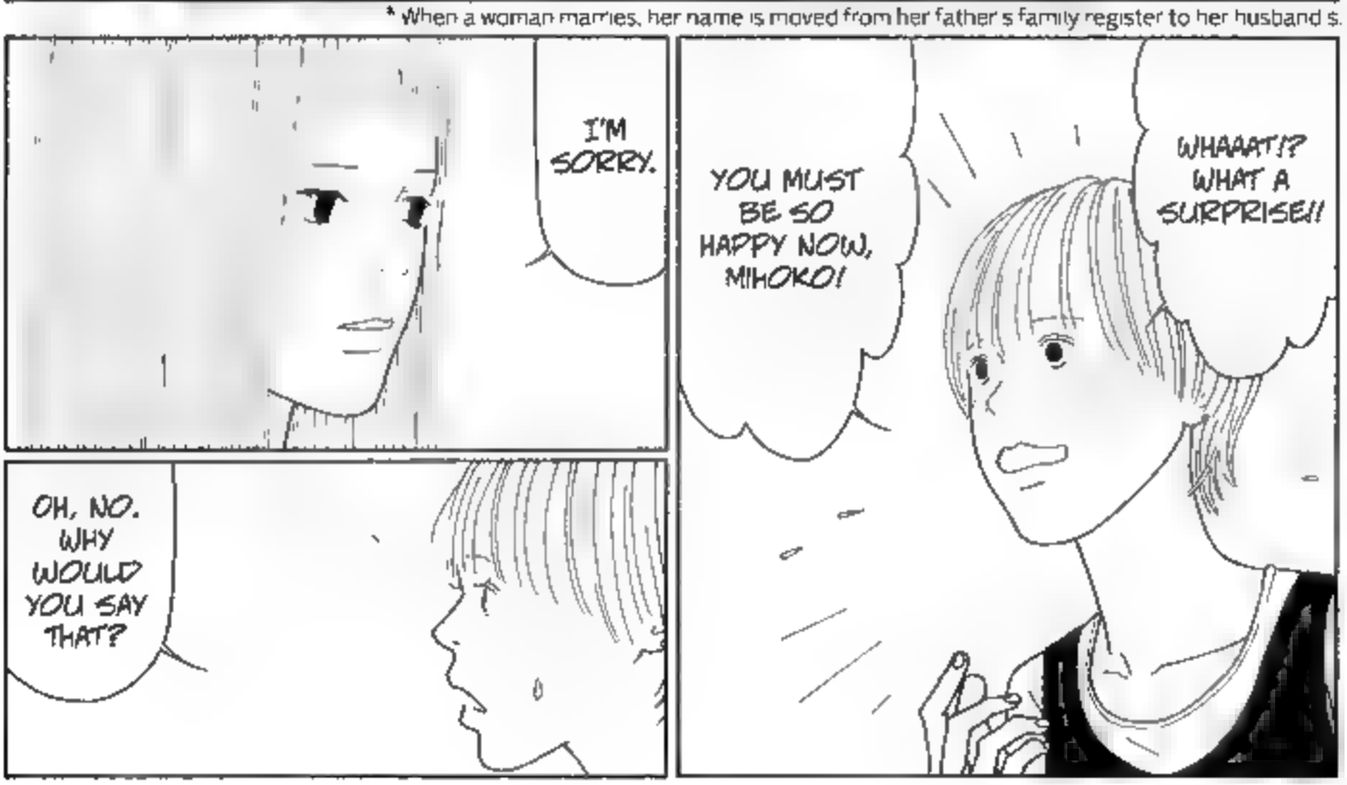
MIHOKO ?
I'M GLAD I CAUGHT YOU. ARE YOU STILL STAYING WITH THAT ARTIST, THE OLD WOMAN?
YEAH.
I LOOKED AT MY BOOKSHELF YESTERDAY AND REALIZED THERE WAS A BOOK THERE I'D BORROWED FROM YOU, SO...
OH,
CURTIS MAYFIELD
YEAH.
SURE.
YEAH. I CONSIDERED JUST SENDING IT TO YOU, BUT I THOUGHT MAYBE WE COULD MEET AND I COULD GIVE IT TO YOU IN PERSON, IF YOU WANT.
WILL YOU MEET UP WITH ME?
WAS IT A BOOK OF PAINTINGS? A WESTERN BOOK?

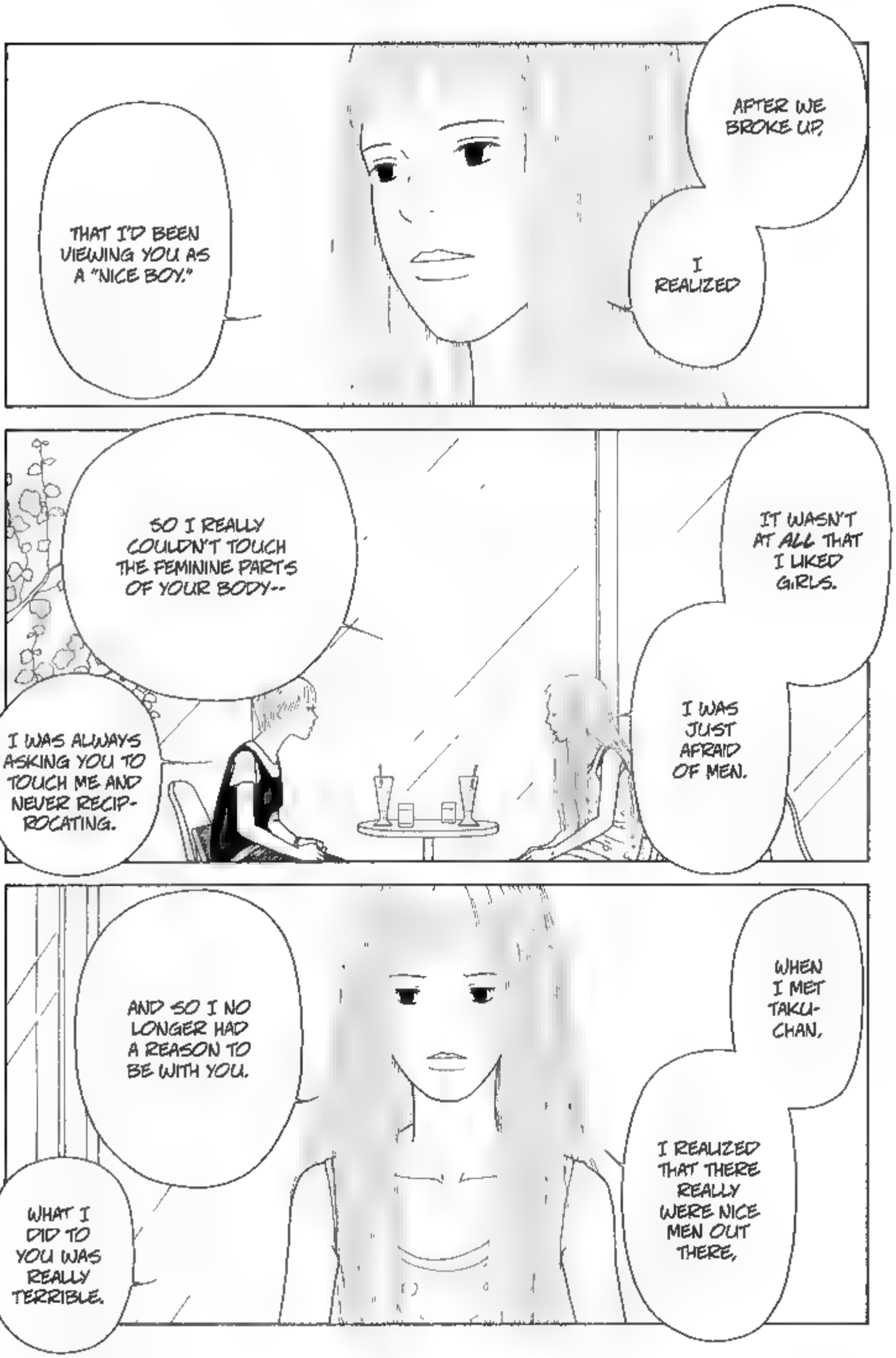
I'M REALLY SORRY. WERE YOU LOOKING FOR THIS?
YEAH ...
BUT I WAS RELIEVED TO HEAR YOU HAD IT.
© ISTVAN BANYAI

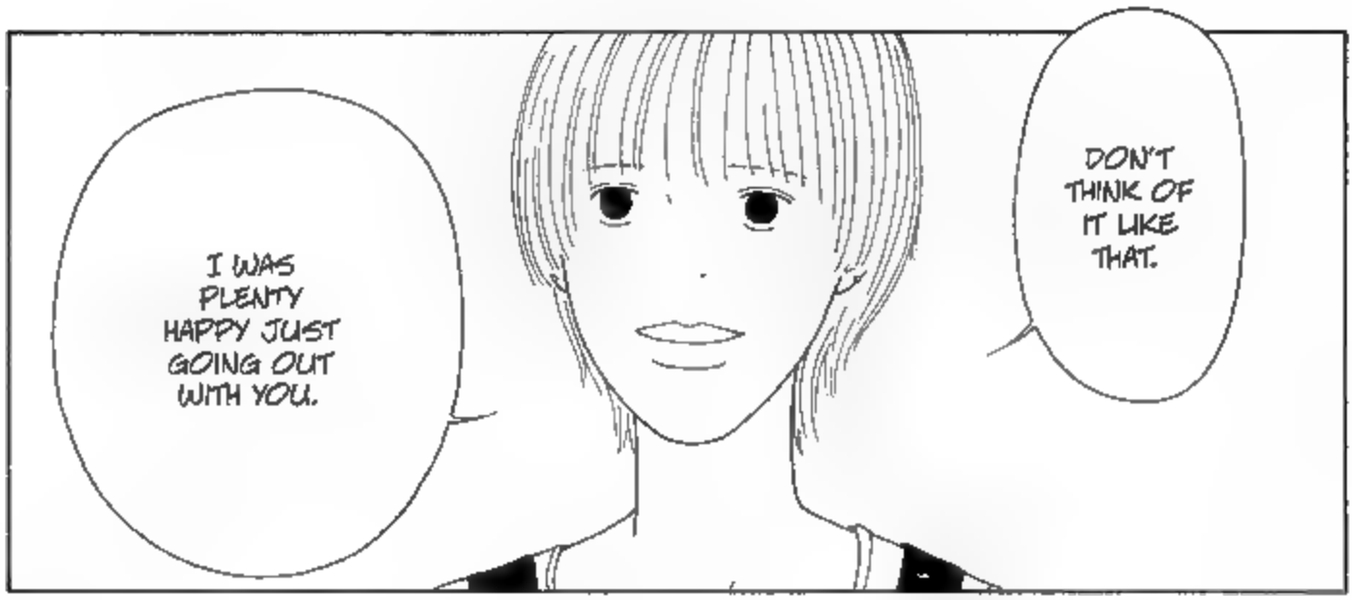


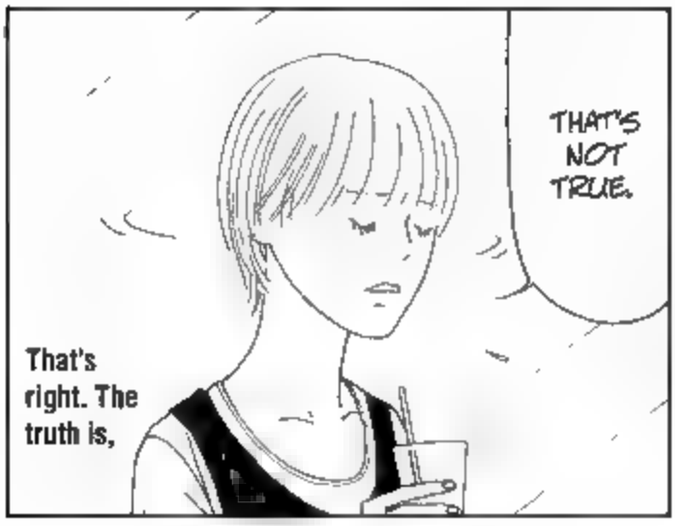


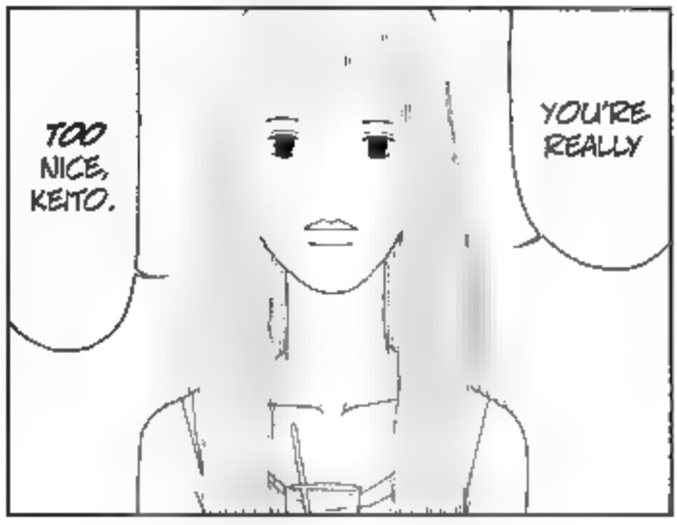
* When a woman marries, her name is moved from her father's family register to her husband's.




AFTER WE BROKE UP,
I REALIZED
THAT I'D BEEN VIEWING YOU AS A "NICE BOY."
IT WASN'T AT ALL THAT I LIKED GIRLS.
I WAS JUST AFRAID OF MEN.
SO I REALLY COULDN'T TOUCH THE FEMININE PARTS OF YOUR BODY--
I WAS ALWAYS ASKING YOU TO TOUCH ME AND NEVER RECIP-ROCATING.
WHEN I MET TAKU-CHAN,
I REALIZED THAT THERE REALLY WERE NICE MEN OUT THERE,
AND SO I NO LONGER HAD A REASON TO BE WITH YOU.
WHAT I DID TO YOU WAS REALLY TERRIBLE.





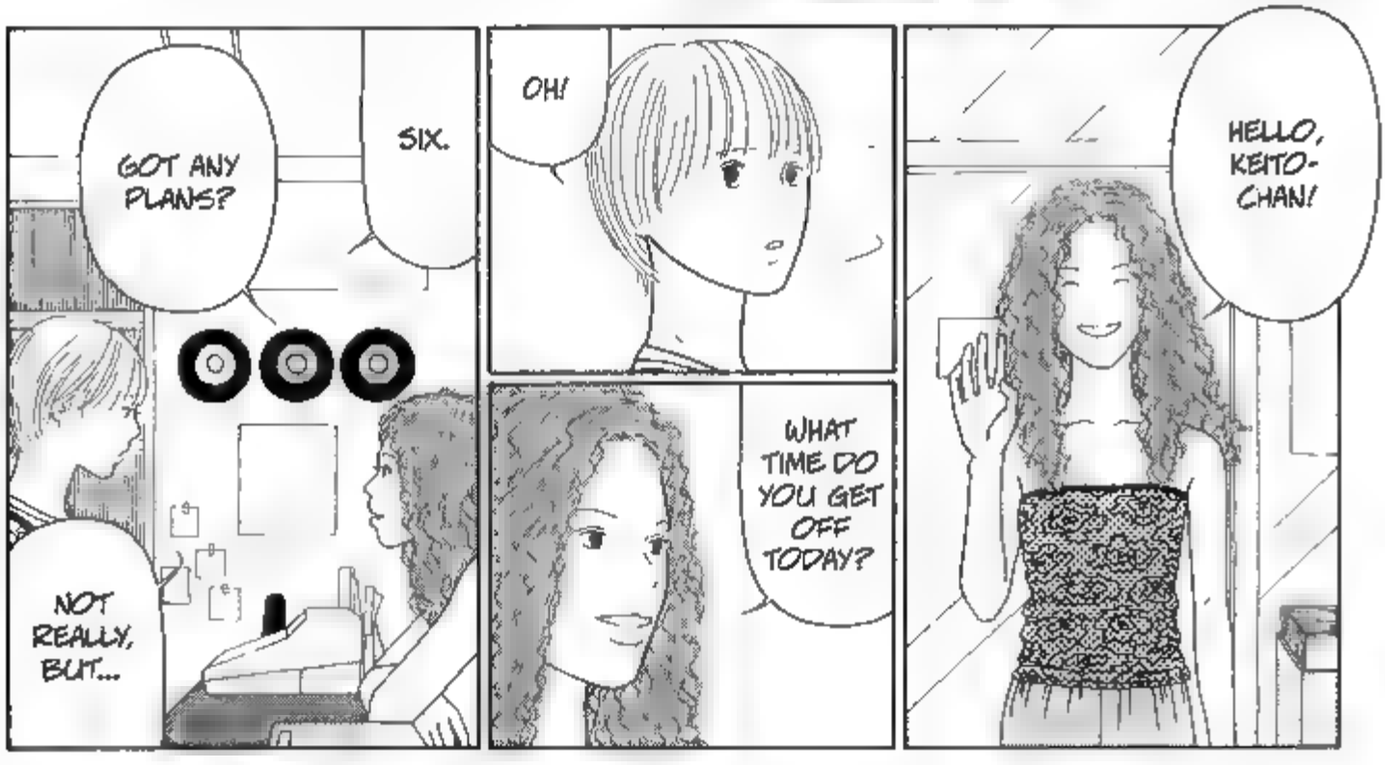


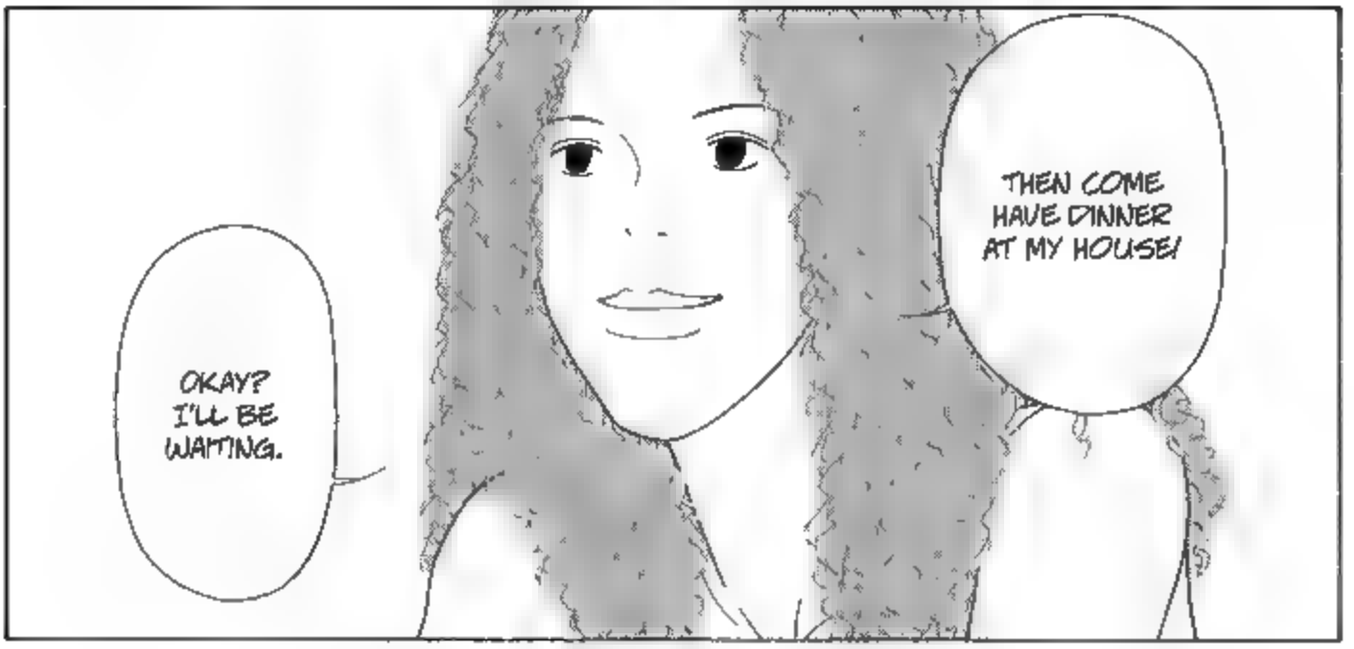
I was always unhappy with our relationship. But it's okay. It's in the past.

SHE'S LIVING WITH RUI.
WHO IS SHE?
I'M HOME.
WELCOME HOME.
OH, THAT'S TOO BAD. I'LL COME BY AGAIN ONCE I'VE PUT TOGETHER A MANUSCRIPT WITH THE INFORMATION I COLLECTED ON RUI-SENSEI.
WELL, I HAVE TO GET WORKING IN THE KITCHEN.
SHE IS!?
HUNH

* In this case, a title used for a respected artist

TENCHOU
MMM?
THAT WAS MY WIFE.
WHO WAS SHE~?
I SAW YOU IN A DEPARTMENT STORE WITH A REALLY PRETTY WOMAN~!
VYYY
WHAAAT? ISN'T SHE TOO YOUNG FOR YOU!?
LSG
Kindr

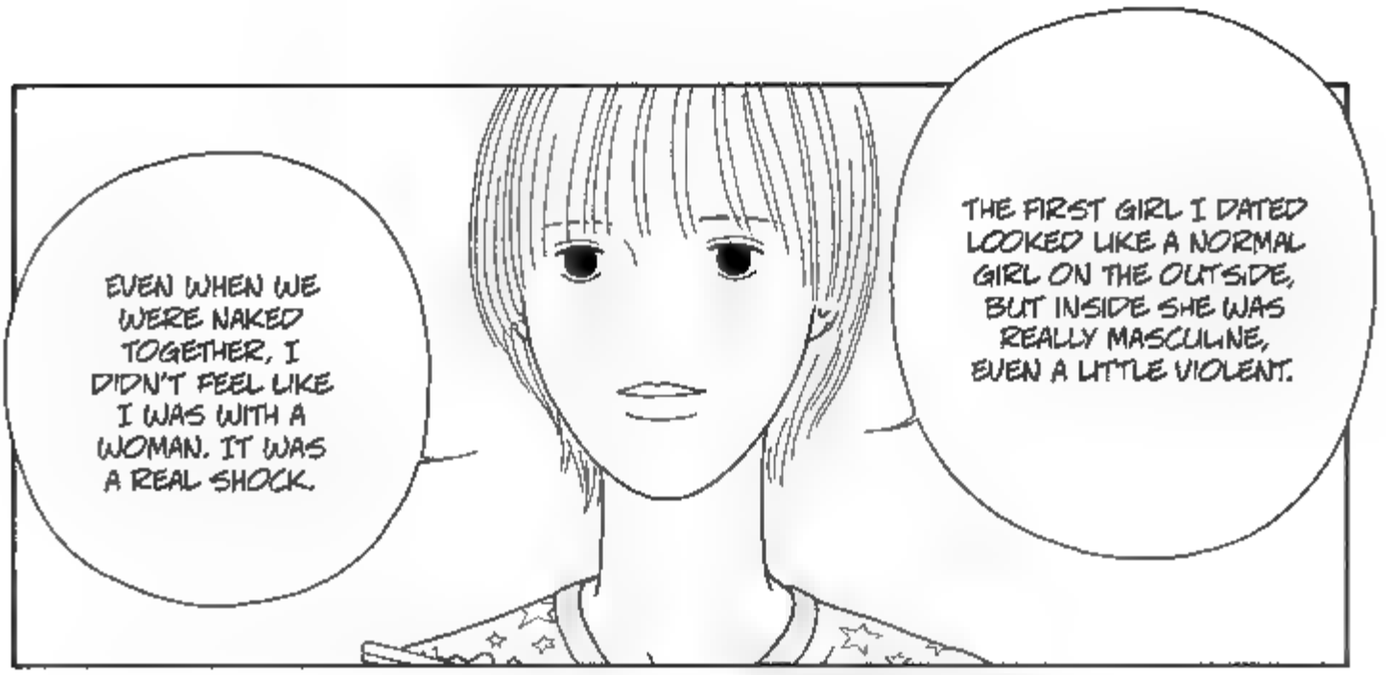

GOT ANY PLANS?
SIX.
NOT REALLY, BUT...
OH!
WHAT TIME DO YOU GET OFF TODAY?
HELLO, KEITO-CHAN!



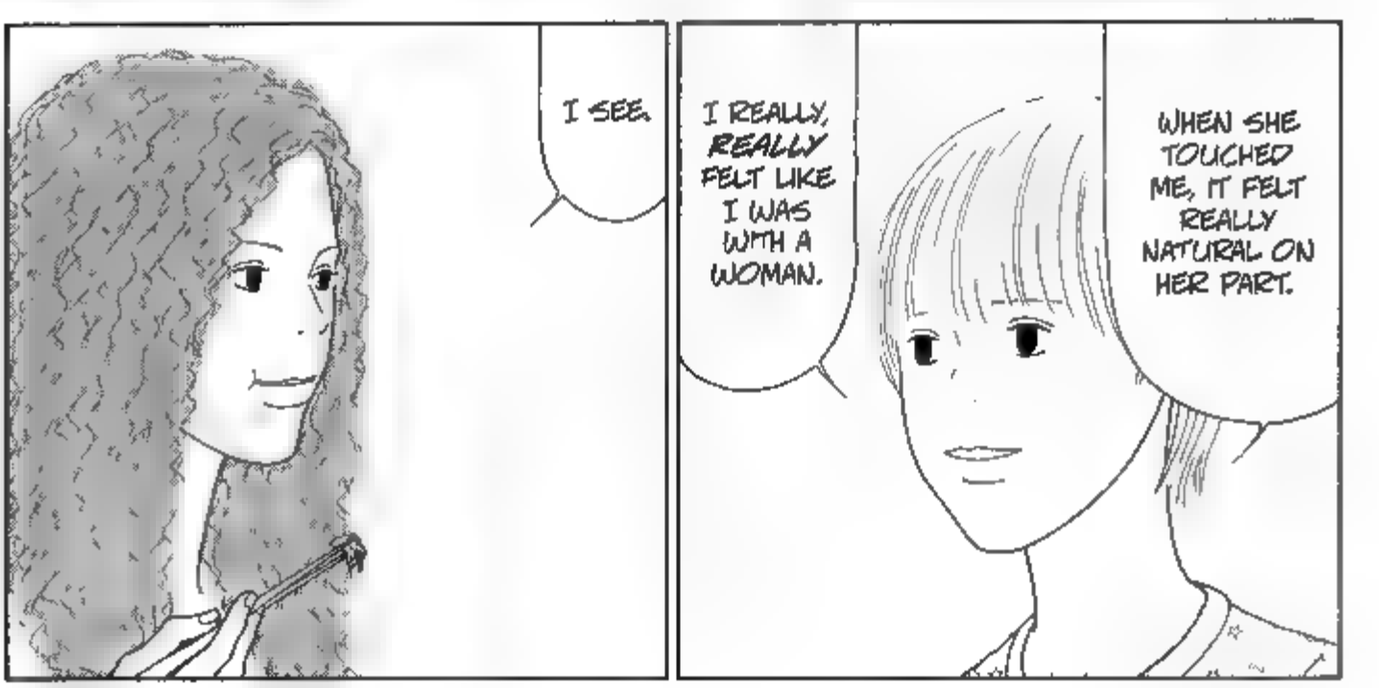
EVER SINCE WE TALKED BEFORE, I'VE BEEN KIND OF WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
YOU PROBABLY THINK THAT IF I FEEL LIKE THAT, I SHOULD JUST TELL YOU WHERE NIKI IS, BUT... WELL, I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW I FEEL.

* ritual expression said before eating.

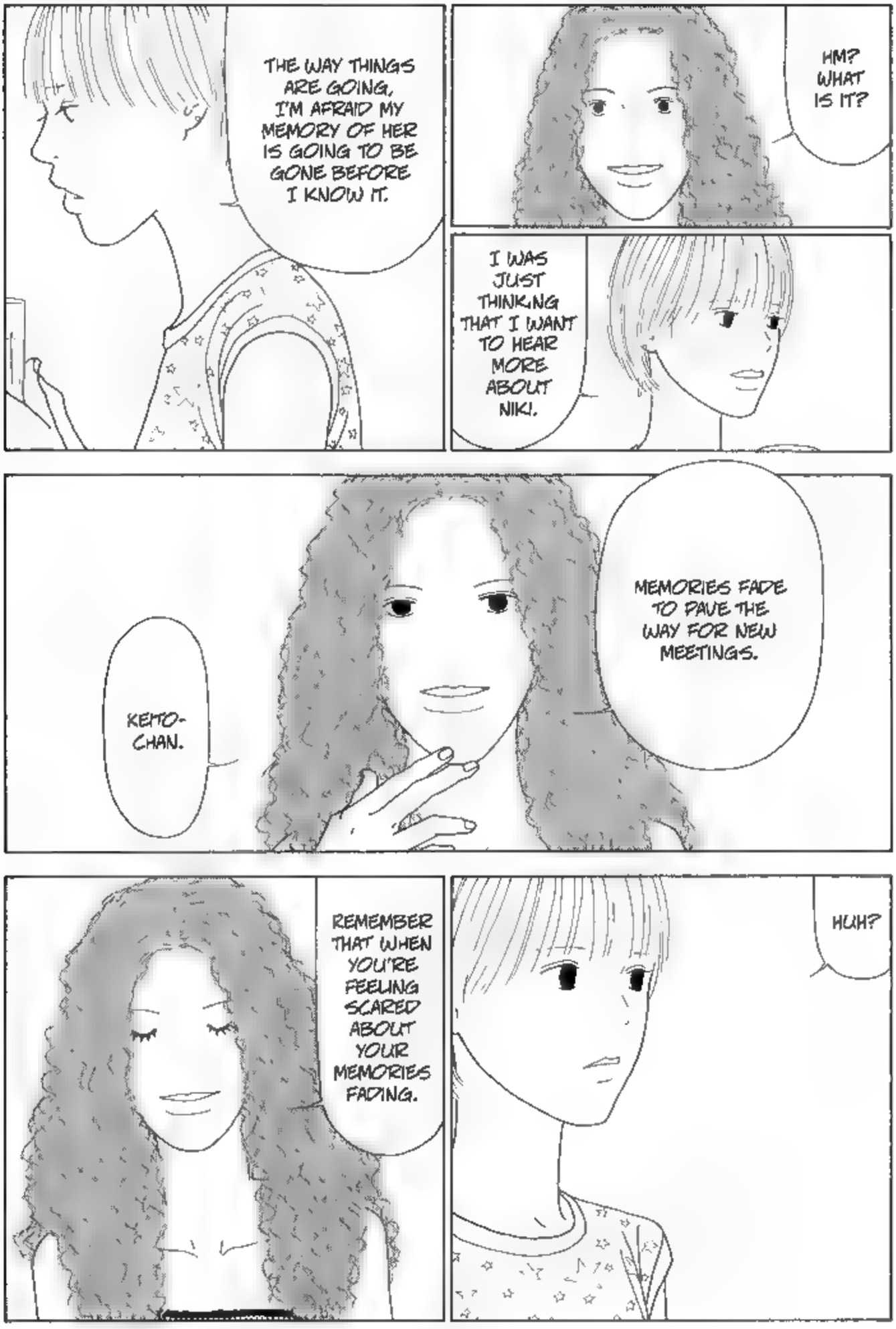
NEW YORK ...
SHE'S GOING TO BE HANGING OUT THERE FOR A WHILE, RELAXING.
NIKI'S IN NEW YORK RIGHT NOW.
HUH?
IT'LL JUST BE A PRETTY LONG TRIP.
IT'S NOT LIKE SHE'S NEVER COMING BACK.
BUT THEY'RE ALL DIFFERENT, AREN'T THEY?
WOMEN MIGHT ALL FIT INTO THE SAME GENERAL CATEGORY.
EMA-SAN.
HM?


EVEN WHEN WE WERE NAKED TOGETHER, I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE I WAS WITH A WOMAN. IT WAS A REAL SHOCK.
THE FIRST GIRL I DATED LOOKED LIKE A NORMAL GIRL ON THE OUTSIDE, BUT INSIDE SHE WAS REALLY MASCULINE, EVEN A LITTLE VIOLENT.

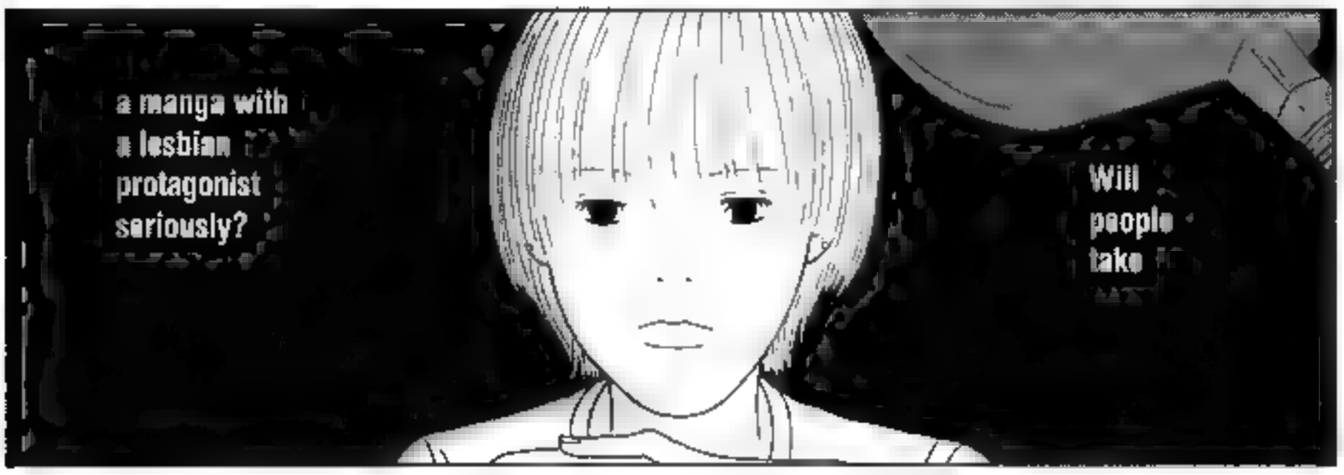
NIKI WAS THE FIRST PERSON I REALLY FELT COMFORTABLE BEING WITH.
THE SECOND GIRL I DATED AVOIDED TOUCHING ALL THE FEMININE AREAS OF MY BODY.


I SEE.
I REALLY, *REALLY* FELT LIKE I WAS WITH A WOMAN.
WHEN SHE TOUCHED ME, IT FELT REALLY NATURAL ON HER PART.

I'VE TAKEN OVER MY PARENTS' BUSINESS FOR THE TIME BEING-- I'M THE OWNER OF A BAR.
BUT SOMETIMES I SING BACKUP IN A SOUL BAND TOO.
THAT'S HOW I MET NIKI, ABOUT SIX YEARS BACK.
SHE WAS ONLY NINETEEN AT THE TIME.
MM. I FELL FOR HER TOO, THOUGHT SHE WAS SOMETHING NICE. JUST LIKE THAT!
hehe
I JUST SORT OF BLURTED OUT SOMETHING REALLY STUPID-- "IT'S AMAZING THAT YOU CAN PLAY TRUMPET SO WELL, CONSIDERING YOU'RE A GIRL."
SHE PROMPTLY RESPONDED: "YEAH. DID I CHANGE YOUR PERCEPTIONS?"
I WOULDN'T CALL HER A GENIUS TRUMPET PLAYER, BUT SHE HAS A LOT OF INDIVIDUALITY.
AND HER SENSE OF RHYTHM IS REALLY EXCEPTIONAL-- SECOND TO NONE.


THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING, I'M AFRAID MY MEMORY OF HER IS GOING TO BE GONE BEFORE I KNOW IT.
HM? WHAT IS IT?
I WAS JUST THINKING THAT I WANT TO HEAR MORE ABOUT NIKI.
KEITO-CHAN.
MEMORIES FADE TO PAVE THE WAY FOR NEW MEETINGS.
REMEMBER THAT WHEN YOU'RE FEELING SCARED ABOUT YOUR MEMORIES FADING.
HUH?

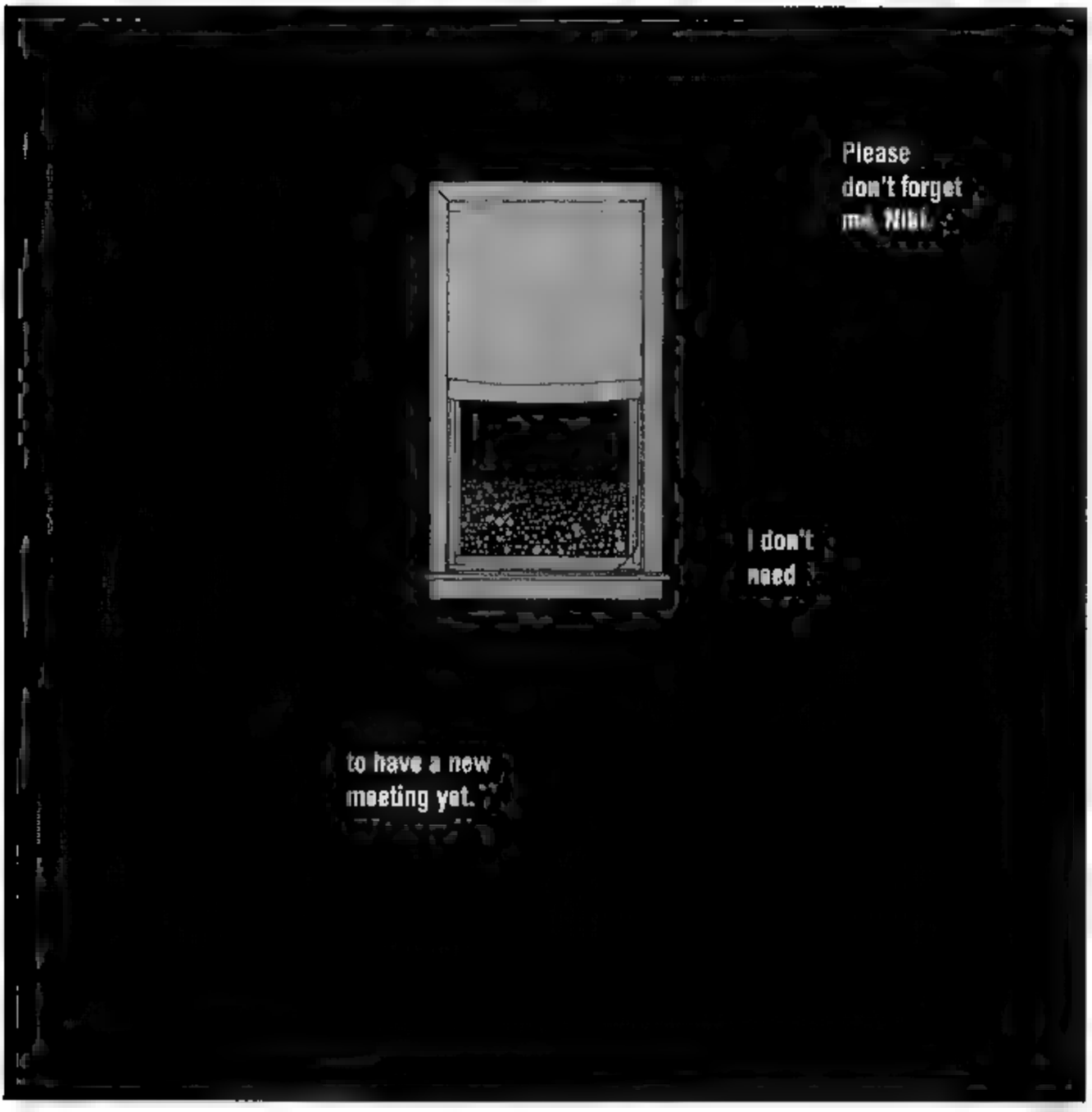
WHEN I WAS SIXTEEN,
A PERSON I ADMIRED, WHO WAS SEVEN YEARS OLDER THAN ME, CALLED ME AND ASKED ME TO COME OVER.
THE TWO OF US WERE ALONE IN A DIMLY LIT ROOM.
SHE SILENTLY REMOVED HER CLOTHES,
AND I GLIMPSED THE SOFT, BEAUTI-FUL CURVES OF HER BODY, SUDDENLY BARED TO MY GAZE.

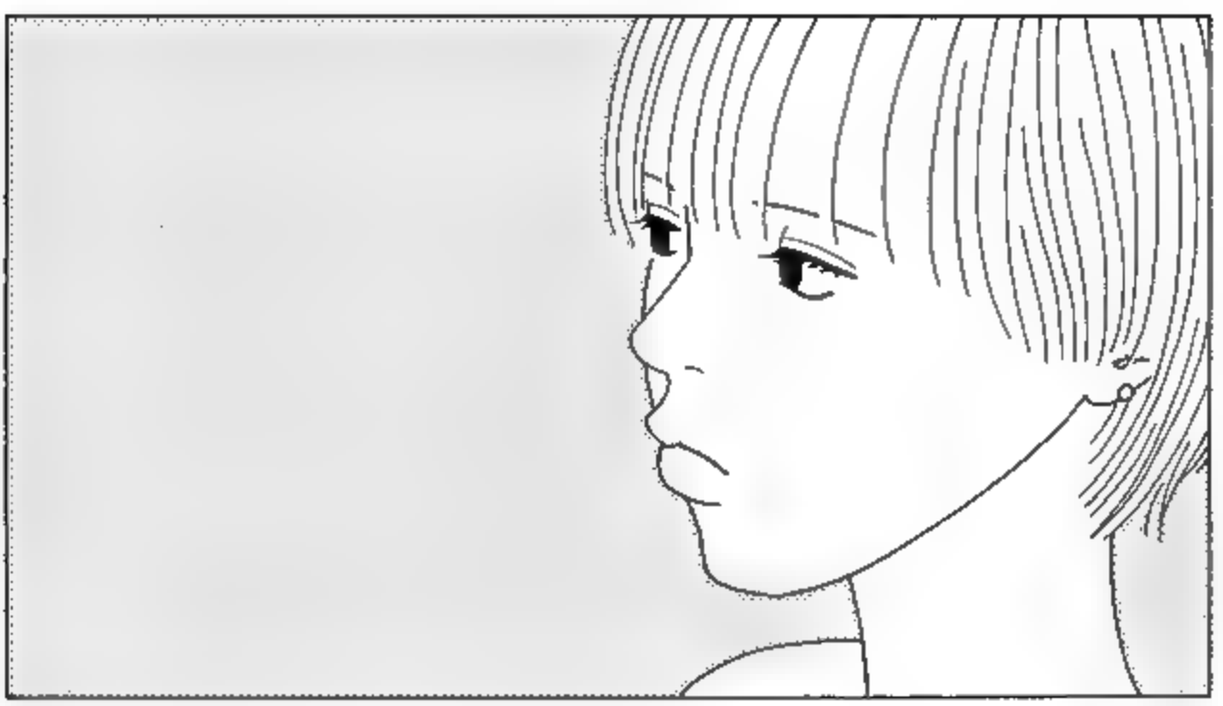


couldn't be any other way.

But, Angie, the you that exists inside me

I wonder what time it is in New York right now?


Please don't forget me, Niki.
I don't need
to have a new meeting yet.



Chapter 6 Dad

Angie.

I don't know when it started, but when I think about you these days,

my mind secretly replaces you with Niki.

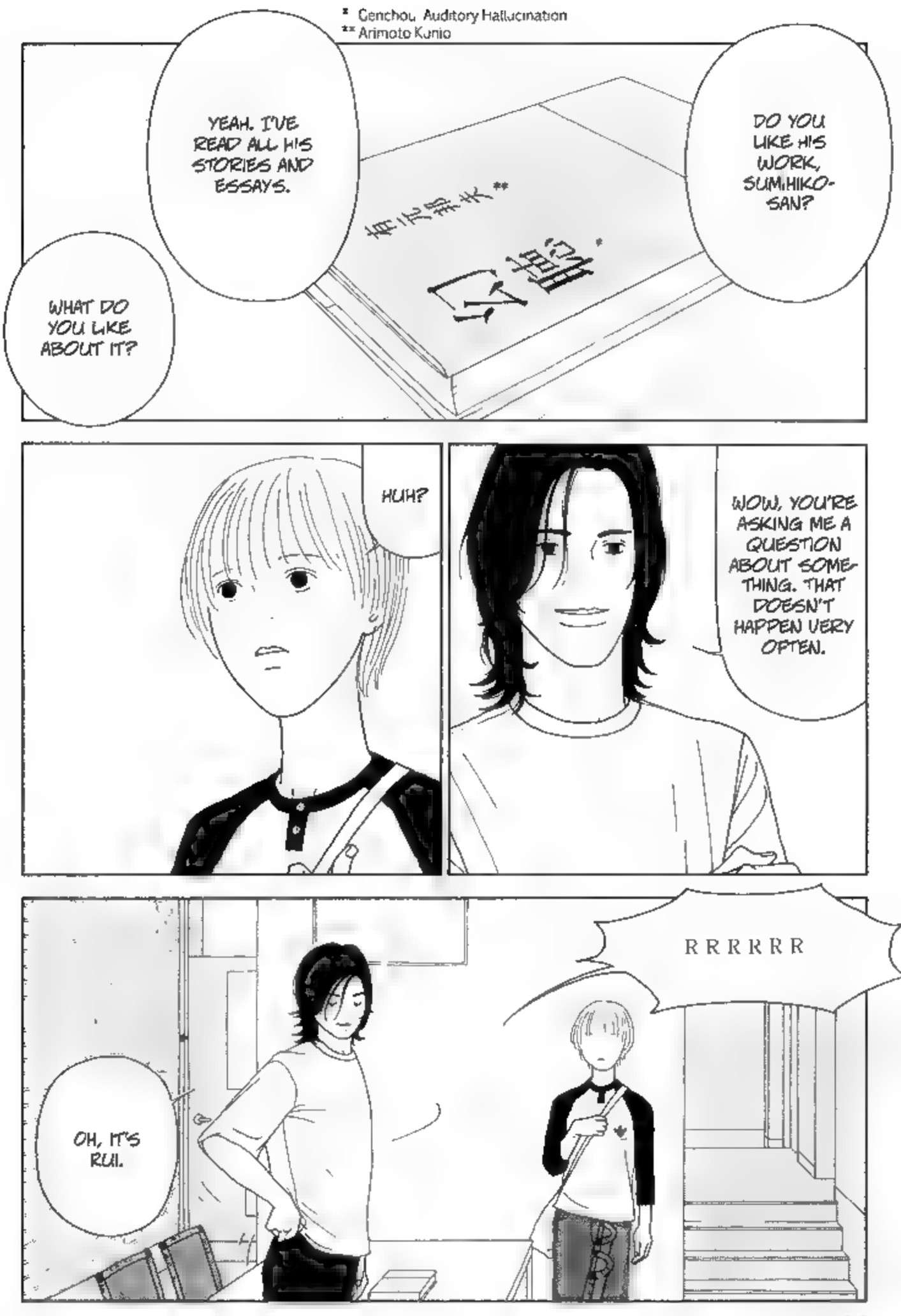
But you and Niki are nothing alike. You're completely different.

Incidentally, I'm reading a book right now. It's the first time I've done that in a while.

It's a literary novel... I think that's the right term.

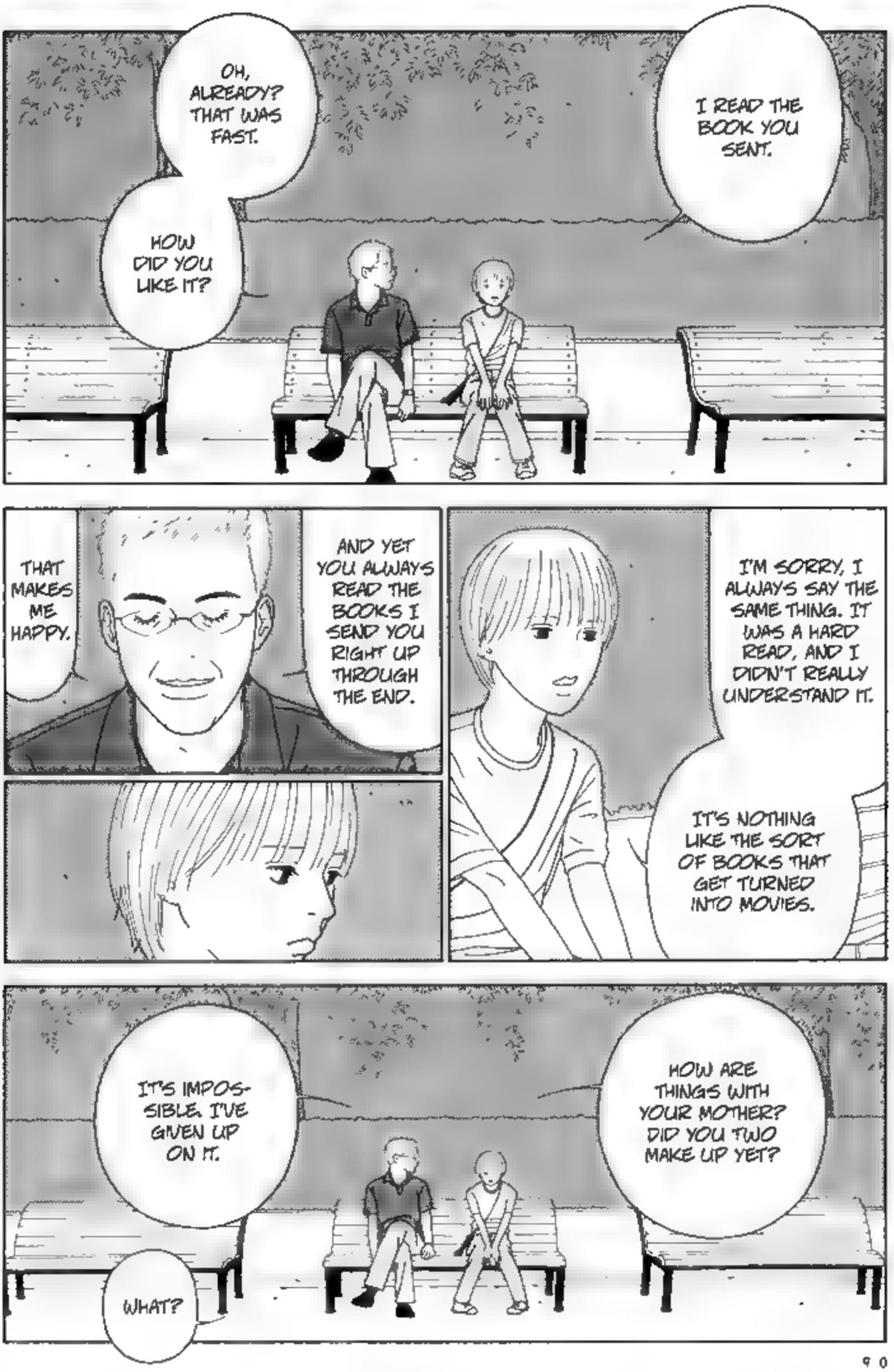
HUH?
THAT'S MY BOOK...
OH, NO! COULD SOMEONE HAVE TAKEN IT FROM MY ROOM!?
KEITO-SAN.
HUNH. YOU ARE?
I'M READING THIS BOOK RIGHT NOW TOO.
I- I'M SORRY! I WAS SURE THAT IT WAS MINE.
UM... I JUST SORT OF...
adidas
THAT'S A SUR-PRISE.
DO YOU LIKE ARIMOTO KUNIO'S WORK?

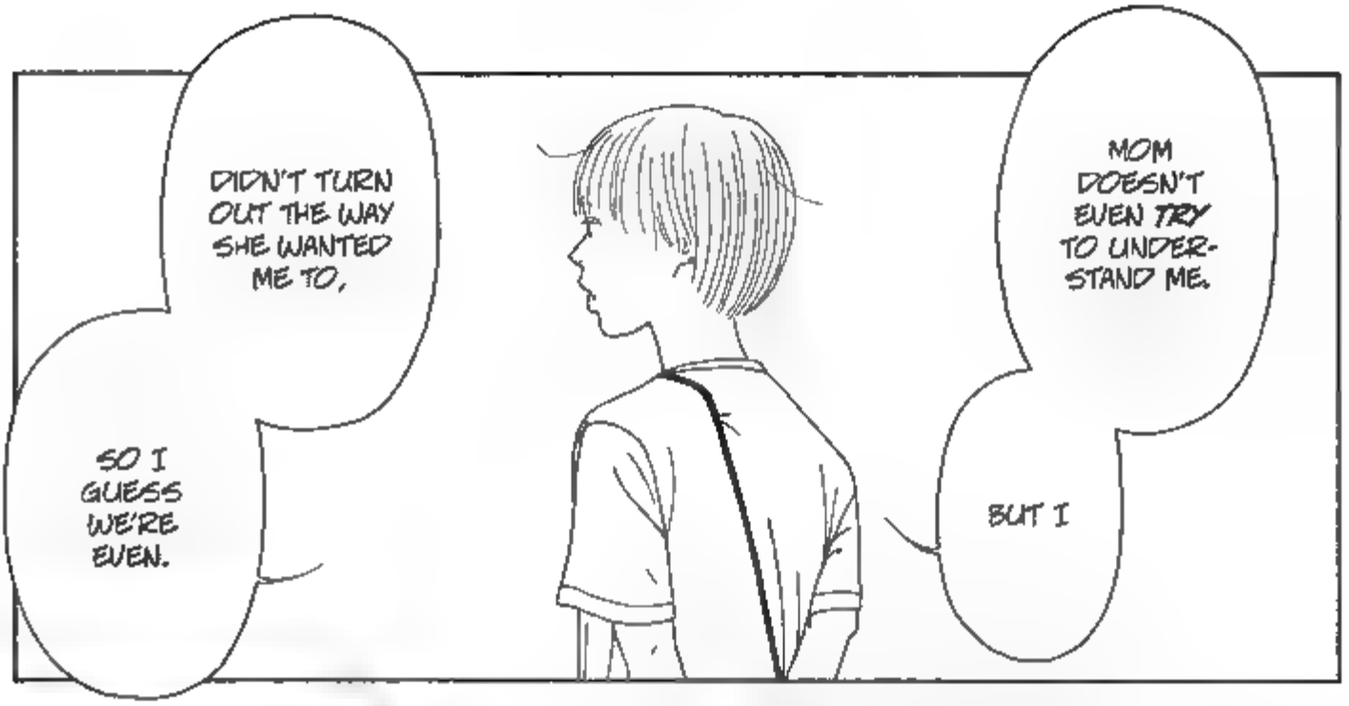
* Genchou: Auditory Hallucination
** Arimoto Kunio

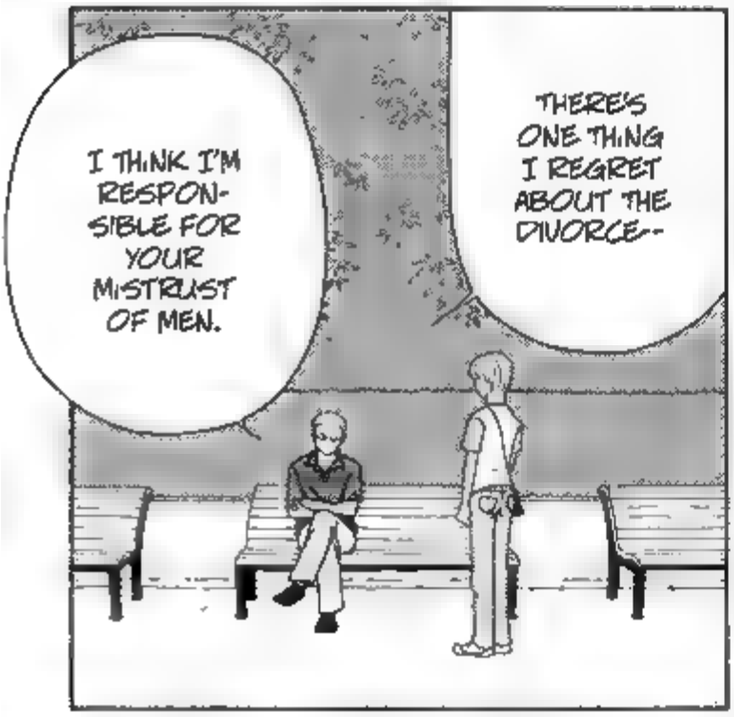

YEAH. I'VE READ ALL HIS STORIES AND ESSAYS.
DO YOU LIKE HIS WORK, SUMIHIKO-SAN?
WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT IT?
HUH?
WOW, YOU'RE ASKING ME A QUESTION ABOUT SOMETHING. THAT DOESN'T HAPPEN VERY OFTEN.
RRRRRR
OH, IT'S RUI.

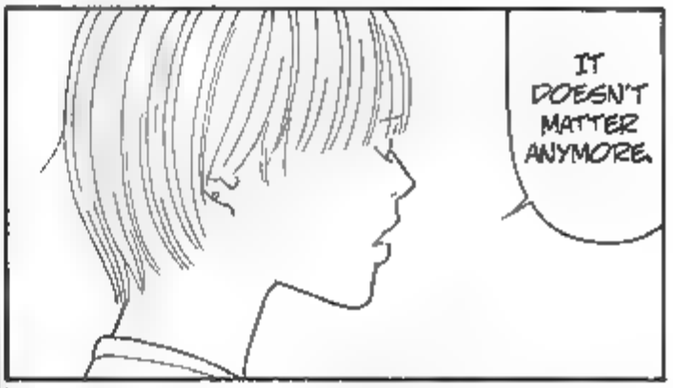
LET'S TALK ABOUT THIS MORE SOMETIME.
TAKE CARE.
YEAH, TO AN ART MUSEUM.
DID SHE GO OUT SOME-WHERE?
I'M GOING TO GO PICK HER UP NOW.

YOU SEEM WELL.
YEAH, I'M DOING WELL RIGHT NOW.


I READ THE BOOK YOU SENT.
OH, ALREADY? THAT WAS FAST.
HOW DID YOU LIKE IT?
I'M SORRY, I ALWAYS SAY THE SAME THING. IT WAS A HARD READ, AND I DIDN'T REALLY UNDERSTAND IT.
IT'S NOTHING LIKE THE SORT OF BOOKS THAT GET TURNED INTO MOVIES.
AND YET YOU ALWAYS READ THE BOOKS I SEND YOU RIGHT UP THROUGH THE END.
THAT MAKES ME HAPPY.
HOW ARE THINGS WITH YOUR MOTHER? DID YOU TWO MAKE UP YET?
IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. I'VE GIVEN UP ON IT.
WHAT?

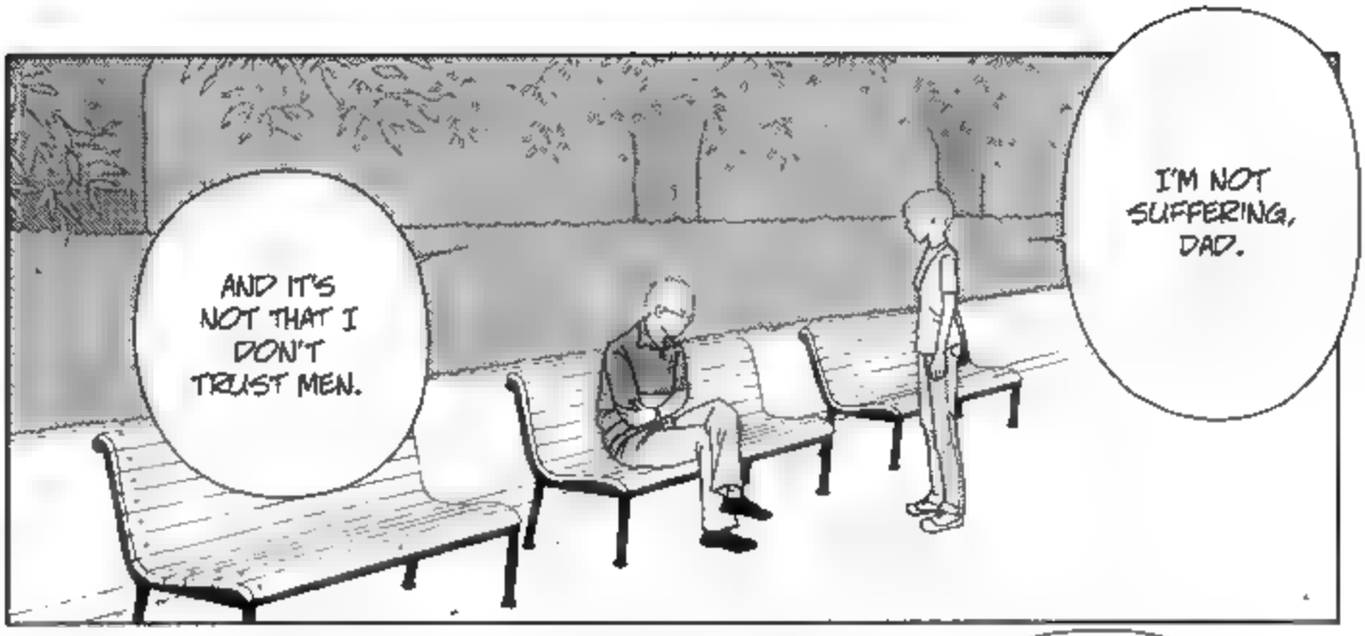

DIDN'T TURN OUT THE WAY SHE WANTED ME TO,
SO I GUESS WE'RE EVEN.
MOM DOESN'T EVEN *TRY* TO UNDER-STAND ME.
BUT I


I THINK I'M RESPON-SIBLE FOR YOUR MISTRUST OF MEN.
THERE'S ONE THING I REGRET ABOUT THE DIVORCE--

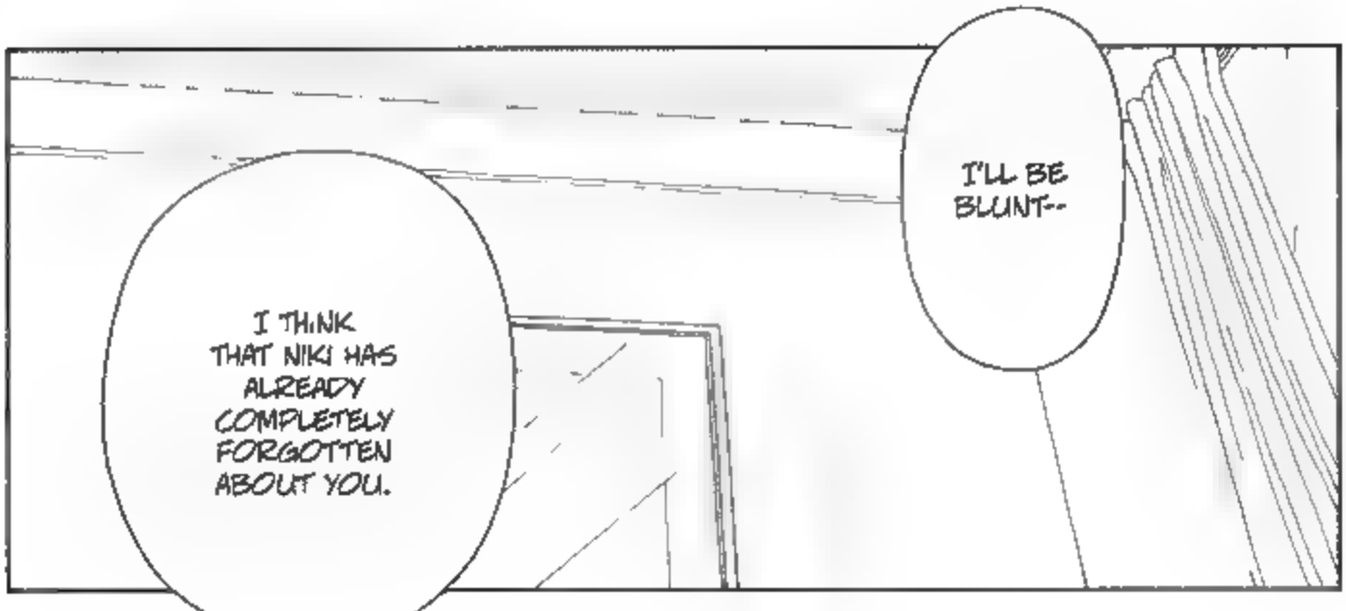

IT DOESN'T MATTER ANYMORE.

KEITO.

I COULDN'T LIVE THE WAY YOU AND YOUR MOTHER WANTED ME TO EITHER,
AND IT'S REALLY HARD FOR ME TO SEE YOU SUF-FERING BECAUSE OF THAT.


I'M NOT SUFFERING, DAD.
AND IT'S NOT THAT I DON'T TRUST MEN.

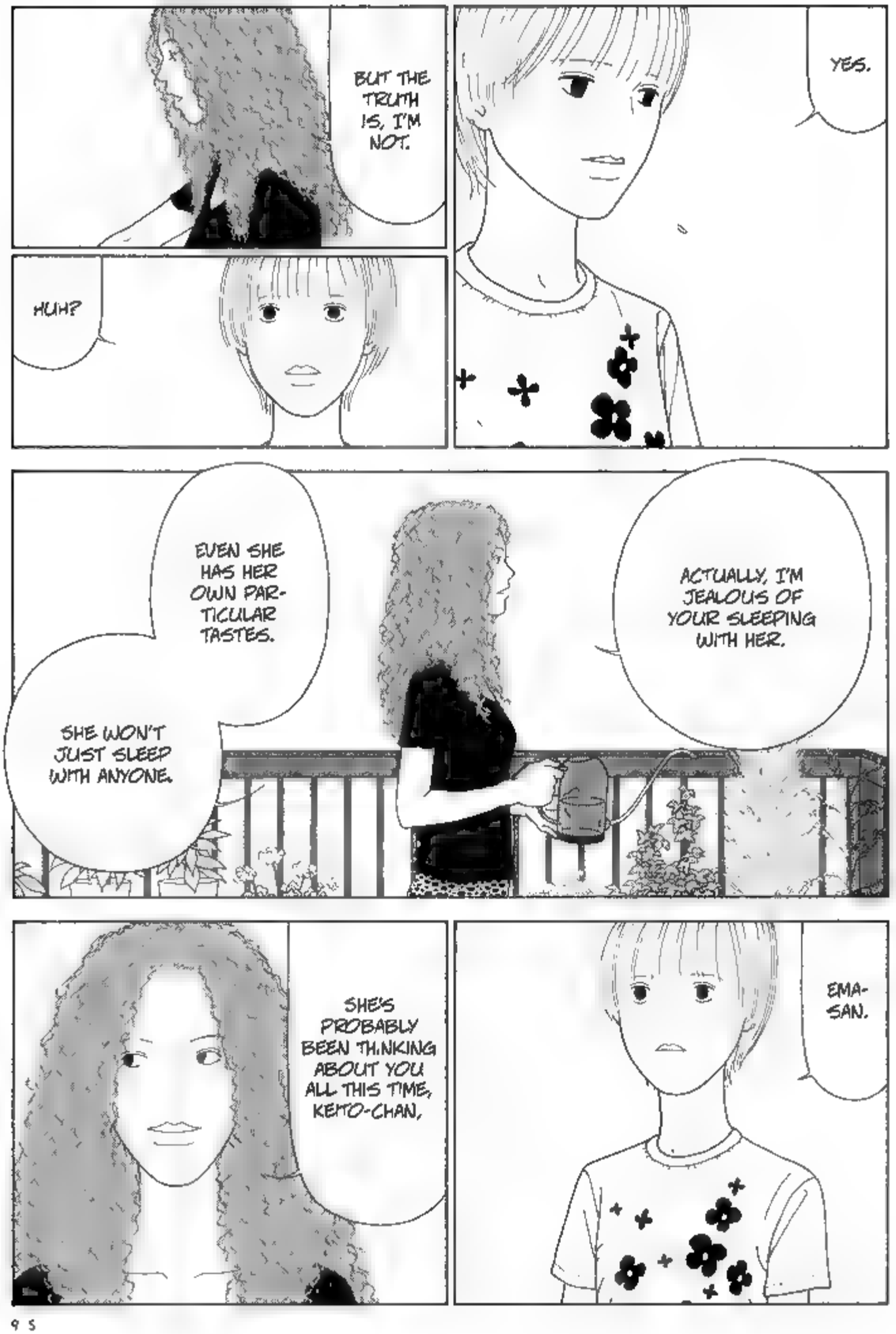
MY BEING A LESBIAN ISN'T YOUR FAULT.

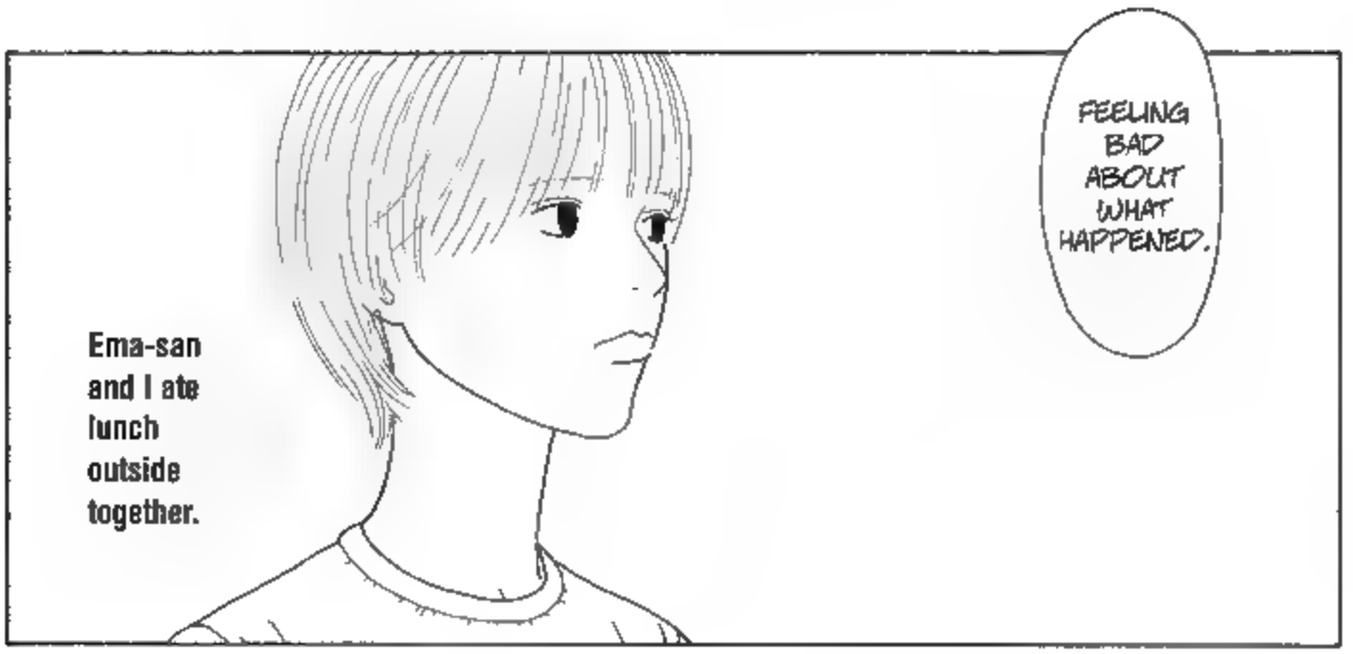

I'LL BE BLUNT--
I THINK THAT NIKI HAS ALREADY COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN ABOUT YOU.

OOH! YOU'RE NOT WEARING A BRA, KEITO-CHAN?
WELL, PHYSICAL CONTACT IS IMPORTANT, BUT...
OH!
EMA-SAN.
ALL SHE CARES ABOUT ARE PEOPLE'S BODIES.
NO, NOT WITH YOU, EMA-SAN.
ARE YOU SCARED?
≥AH!≤
≥AH.≤
≥AH.≤

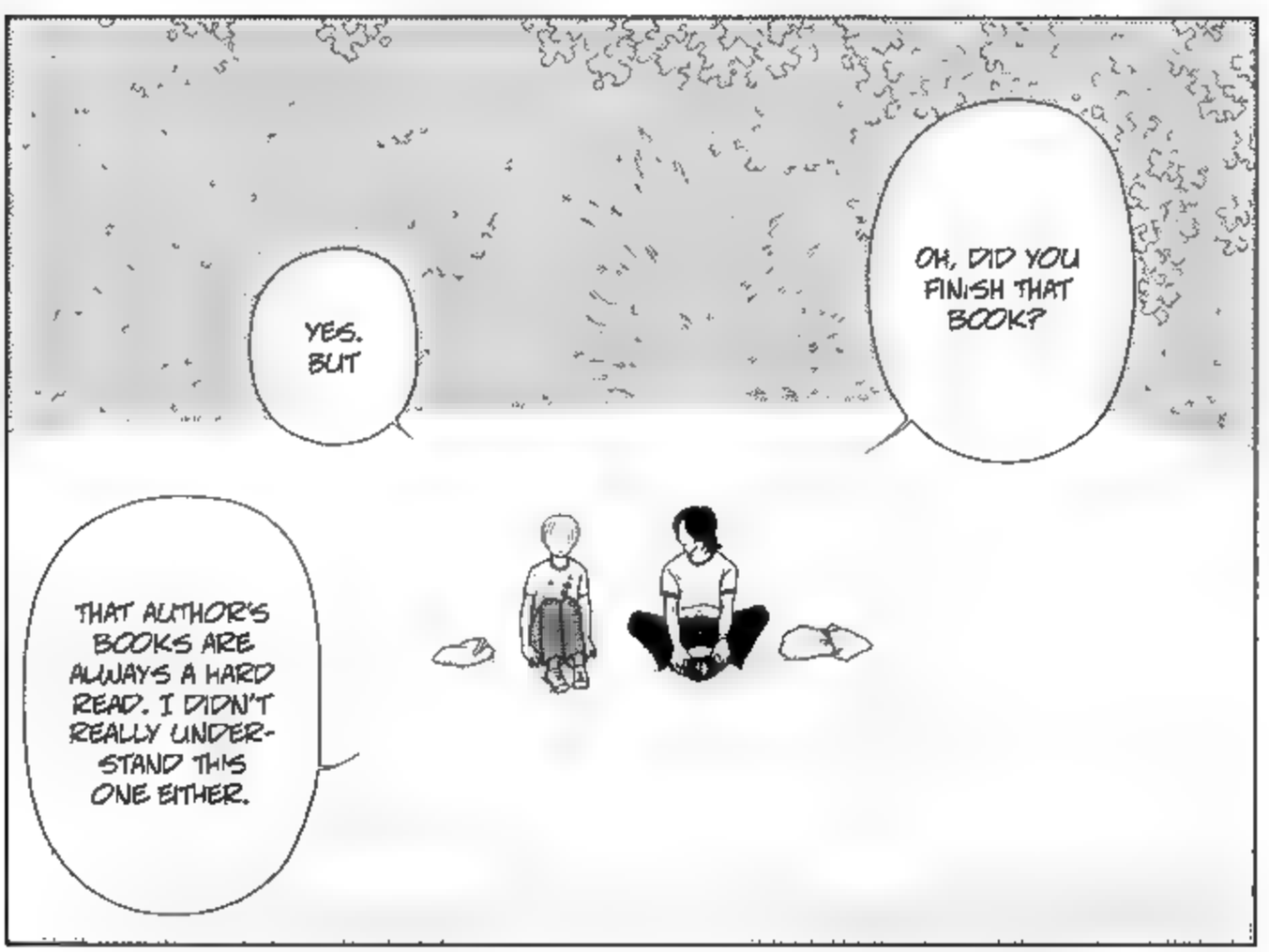
I wonder why I dreamed about Ema-san and not Niki?

The dream felt strangely real.


BUT THE TRUTH IS, I'M NOT.
HUH?
YES.
EVEN SHE HAS HER OWN PARTICULAR TASTES.
SHE WON'T JUST SLEEP WITH ANYONE.
ACTUALLY, I'M JEALOUS OF YOUR SLEEPING WITH HER.
SHE'S PROBABLY BEEN THINKING ABOUT YOU ALL THIS TIME, KEITO-CHAN,
EMA-SAN.



Then I walked around the park on my own for a while, and bumped into Sumihiko—he'd gone out shopping and was headed home.



HIS STORIES TEACH YOU THAT LONELINESS IS INESCAPABLE.
AND YET, STRANGELY ENOUGH, THEY AREN'T DEPRESSING. THAT'S WHAT'S SO FASCINATING ABOUT THEM.
AND YET YOU KEEP READING THEM ANYWAY?
HUH?
OH.
I READ SOMEWHERE
THAT HE ABANDONED HIS WIFE AND CHILD BECAUSE OF HIS WRITING.
THAT ISN'T QUITE RIGHT.
WELL, IT MIGHT SEEM THAT WAY FROM HIS FAMILY'S POINT OF VIEW,
BUT HE'S PROBABLY THE SORT OF PERSON WHO CAN'T STAND HAVING A FULFILLING LIFE-- WHEN HE'S AT A POINT WHERE HE SHOULD FEEL SATISFIED WITH HIS LIFE, HE JUST WANTS TO RUN AWAY.

It is early afternoon. The sweet scent of the cake that his wife is baking wafts through the air

his young daughter plays innocently in a beautiful sunlit garden.

As he watches her from the porch,

he has the sudden feeling that he is losing himself

HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE GOTTEN MARRIED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE BECOME A FATHER!

SO HE RAN AWAY FROM THAT?

THAT WAS IRRESPONSIBLE OF HIM.

YOU CAN'T SEE THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOMETHING BEFOREHAND, AND PEOPLE HAVE NAIVE DREAMS.

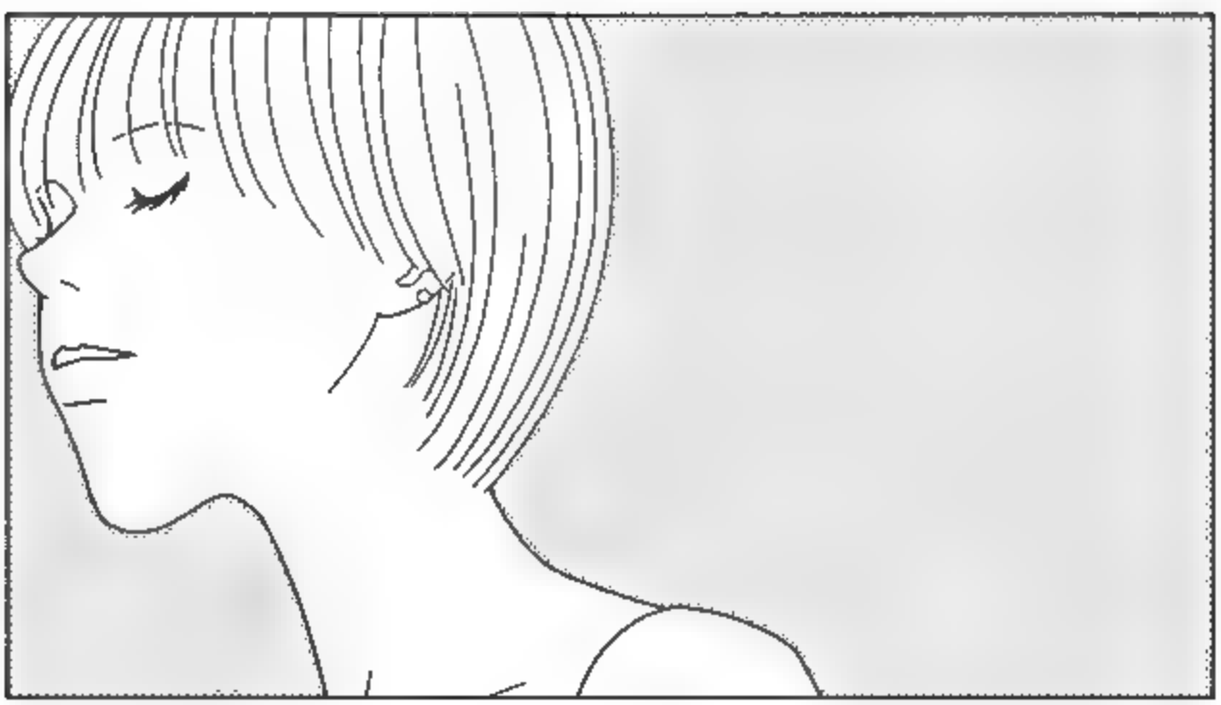
THEY FEEL LIKE THEY WANT TO HAVE SOMEONE WHO WILL REMEMBER THEM.

OH.

THEY'RE JUST NOT TOGETHER IN THE SAME PLACE ANY-MORE.
HE DIDN'T REALLY ABANDON HIS FAMILY.
HE'S PROBABLY BEEN THINKING OF THEM ALL THIS TIME.
BUT IT SOUNDS TO ME LIKE YOU'RE JUST MAKING EXCUSES FOR HIM.
THAT'S A ROMANTIC INTERPRETA-TION OF IT.
:MMMM/:
DO YOU HAVE SOME SORT OF GRUDGE AGAINST THIS GUY?
HUH?

I don't have a grudge
against Dad or Mom.

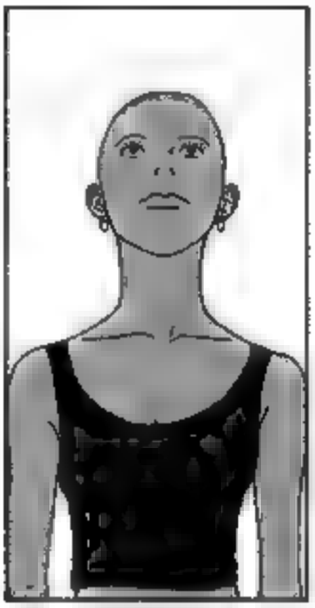
I just haven't tried hard enough
to accept the people who brought me into this world.



Chapter. 7 My Girl

Angie.

You're incredibly tough.



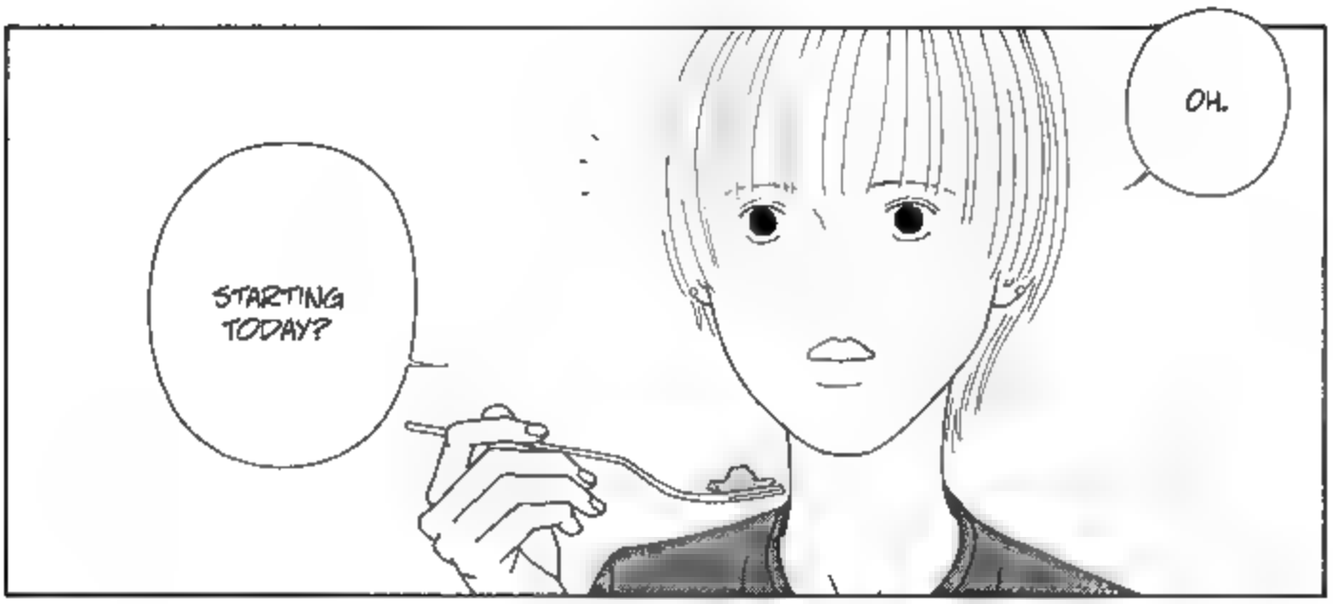
I have the feeling that if I make you a strong person,

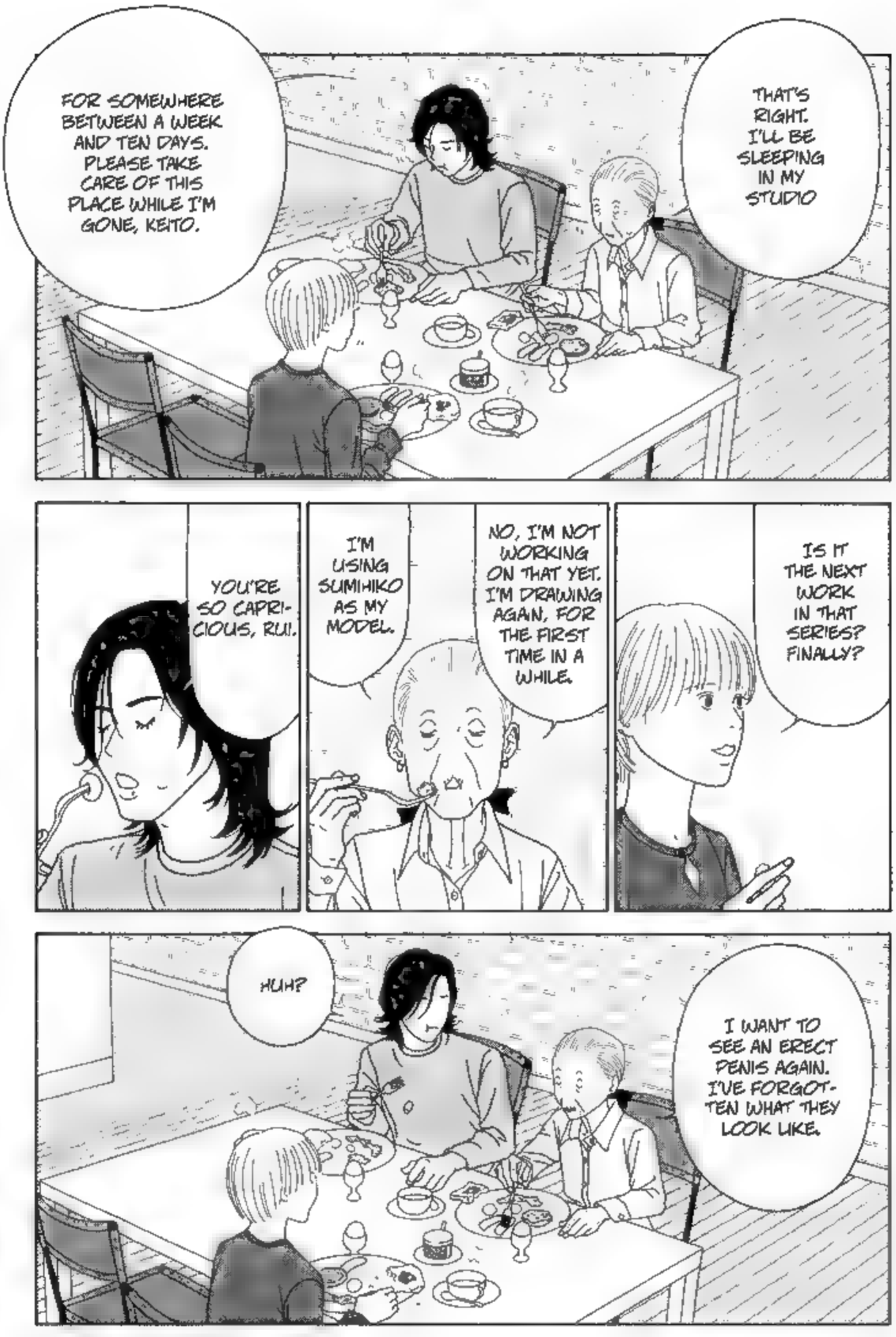
I'll become one too.

Incidentally, Ema-san is dating an older woman right now.

It's too late for me to wonder

if I should have gone out with her.




FOR SOMEWHERE BETWEEN A WEEK AND TEN DAYS. PLEASE TAKE CARE OF THIS PLACE WHILE I'M GONE, KEITO.
THAT'S RIGHT. I'LL BE SLEEPING IN MY STUDIO
YOU'RE SO CAPRI-CIOUS, RUI.
I'M USING SUMIHIKO AS MY MODEL.
NO, I'M NOT WORKING ON THAT YET. I'M DRAWING AGAIN, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE.
IS IT THE NEXT WORK IN THAT SERIES? FINALLY?
HUH?
I WANT TO SEE AN ERECT PENIS AGAIN. I'VE FORGOT-TEN WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE.

GEEZ, YOU GET THE PLACE ALL TO YOURSELF
BUT YOU DON'T HAVE A BOYFRIEND TO INVITE OVER, KEITO? WHAT A WASTE.
SO WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL THEN?
WELL, I GET TO COOK FOR MYSELF FOR THE FIRST TIME IN A WHILE,
AND I HAVE MORE FREEDOM IN TERMS OF WHAT TIME I WANT TO EAT AND TAKE MY BATH. THAT'S ALL.
I'M GOING OUT FOR A MINUTE, TENCHOU!
!

VRRR
HUH? HEY, KEITO!?
NIKI!

I MADE FRIENDS WITH EMA-SAN.
I HEARD YOU WERE IN NEW YORK FOR A WHILE.
SHE TOLD ME ABOUT YOUR NOT WANTING TO HAVE AN EXCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH ANYONE.
WHAT?
PLEASE, LET ME BE ONE OF THE PEOPLE YOU FOOL AROUND WITH!
KEITO ...
I DON'T CARE WHAT SORT OF RELATIONSHIP WE HAVE- I JUST WANT TO SPEND TIME WITH YOU.

IT'S THE SORT OF RELATIONSHIP THAT DOESN'T WORK IF YOU HAVE ANY EXPECTATIONS OF YOUR PARTNER OR DISSATISFACTION WITH THE RELATIONSHIP.
CAN YOU TAKE THE VIEW THAT ENJOYING OURSELVES IS ENOUGH?

I'M FREE THE EVENING AFTER TOMORROW.
HUH?
I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.

I-...
I'M FREE!
HOW ABOUT YOU, KEITO?
THANKS, NIKI!
OKAY, SO BE HERE AT SEVEN THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW!

THE NIGHT VIEW FROM HERE IS NICE.
ISN'T IT?

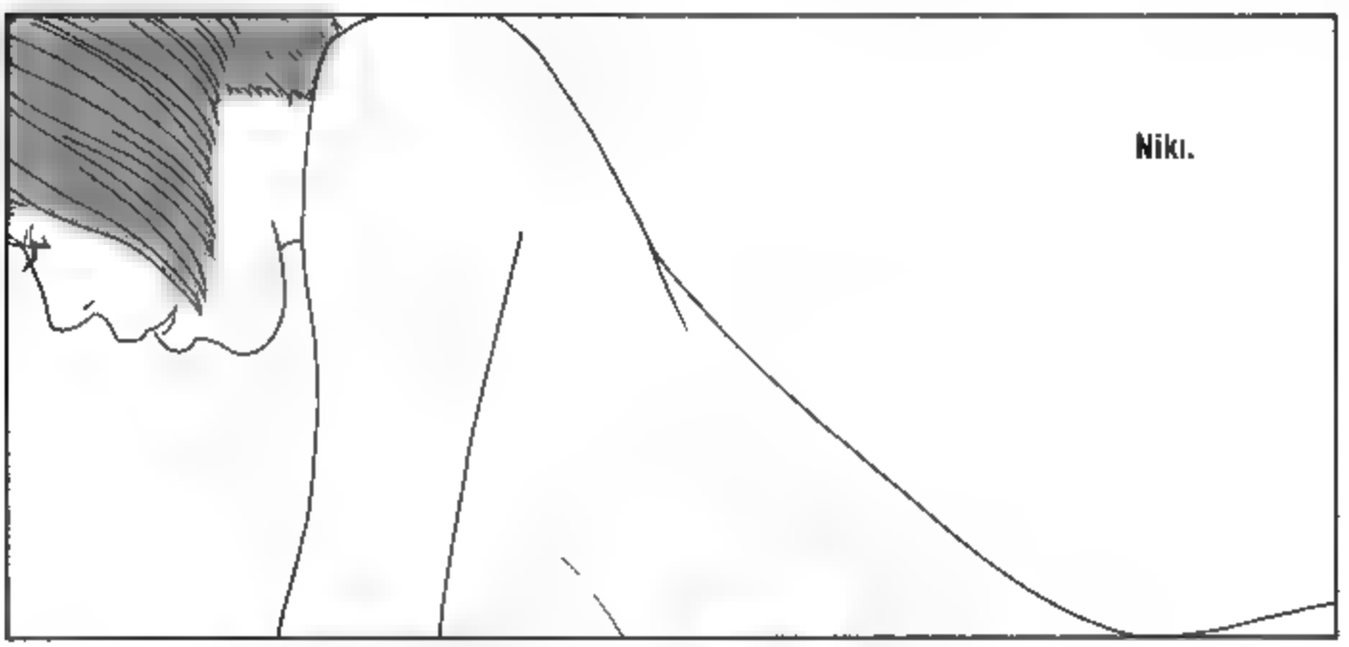
A CAGE ABOUT FIVE METERS SQUARE,
STREWN WITH FAKE LEGS... THAT SORT OF THING.
SHE'S BEEN WORKING ON HER "IMPRIS-ONED" SERIES LATELY.

I'VE HEARD OF HER, BUT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HER.
TAKEUCHI RUI, THE ARTIST...

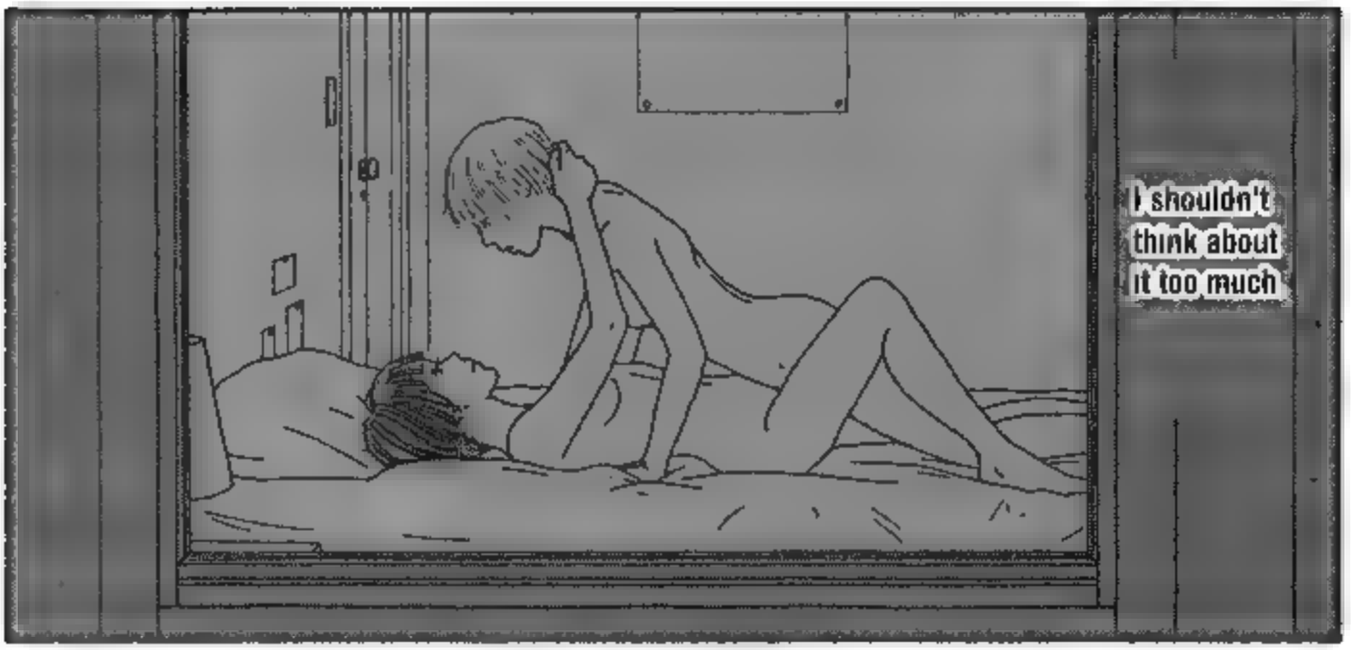
IMPRIS-ONED...

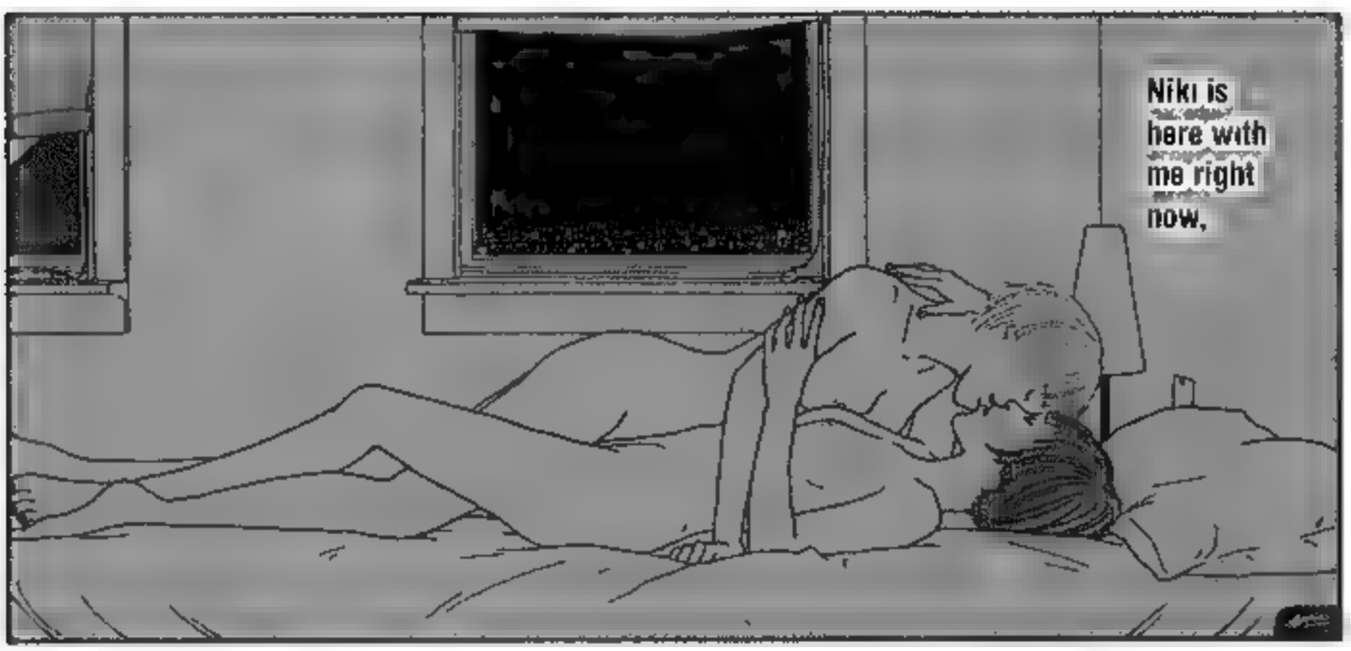
YEAH.
ARE YOU NERVOUS, KEITO?
YOU'RE SO WEIRD. IT'S NOT LIKE THIS IS OUR FIRST TIME TOGETHER.

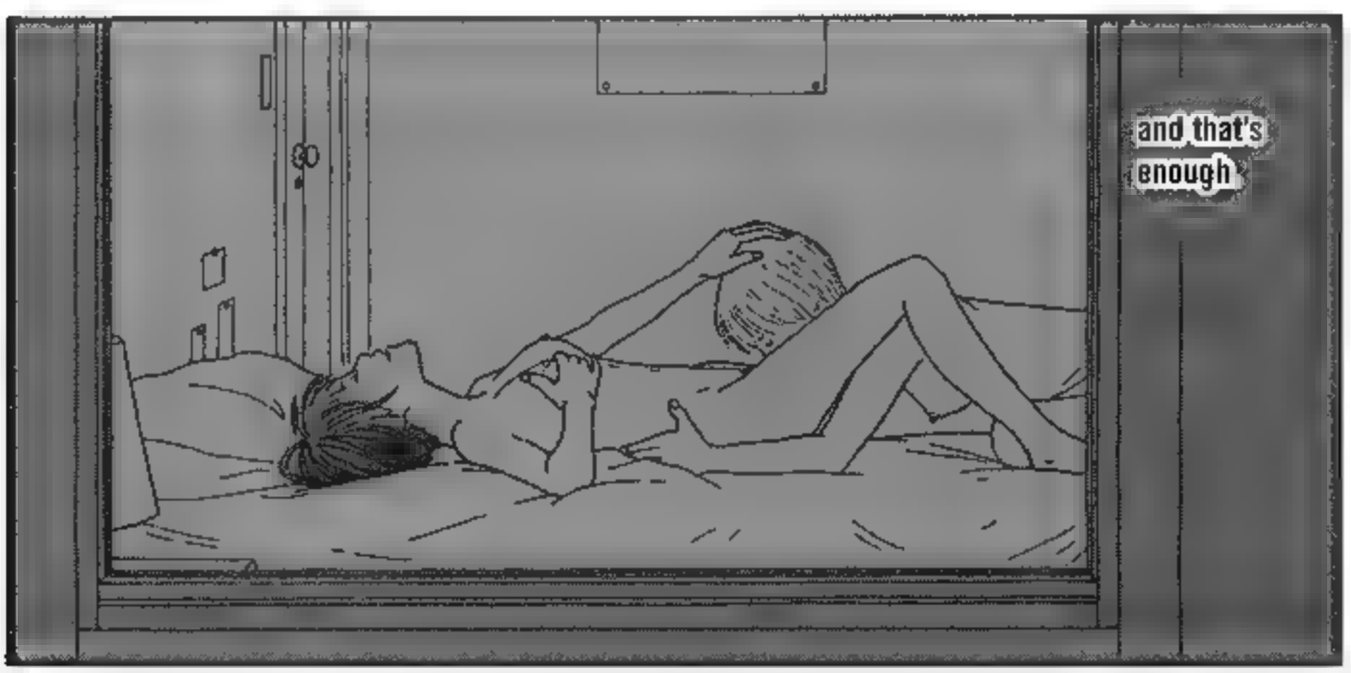
Nikı.


Nikı.

Nikı.

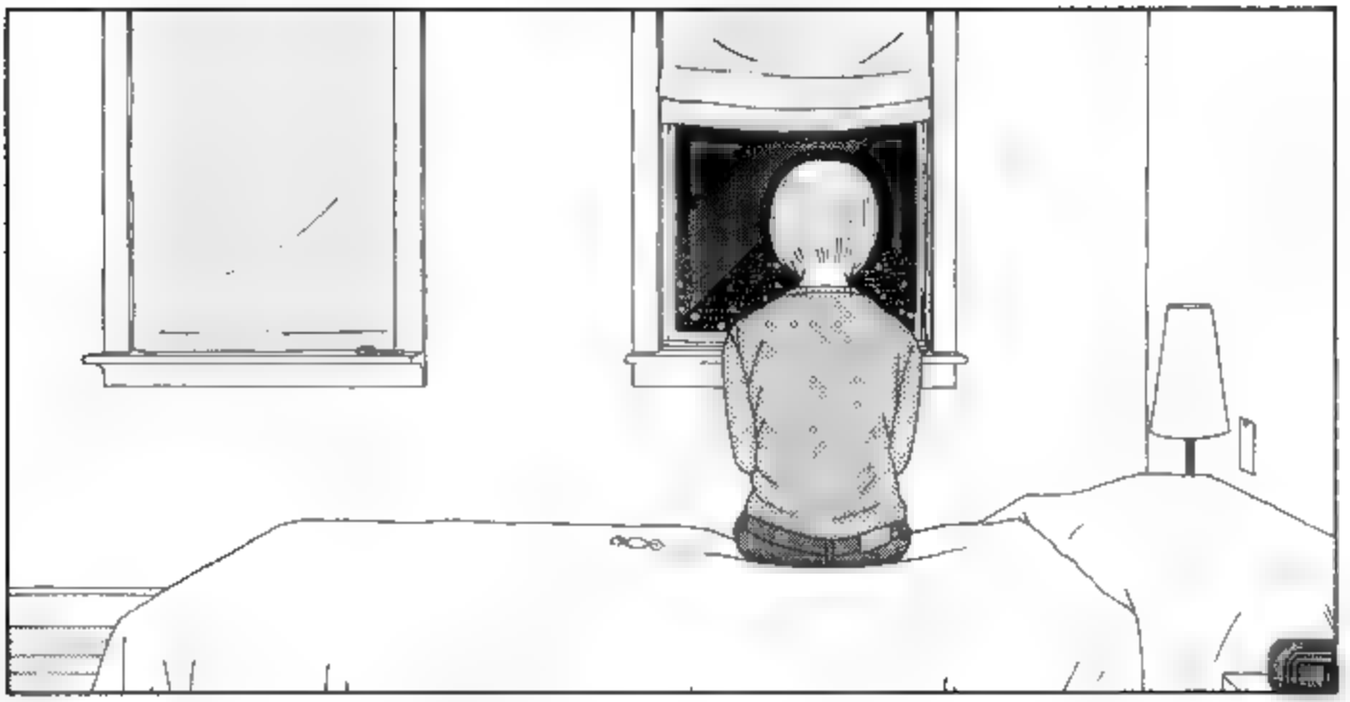

I shouldn't think about it too much

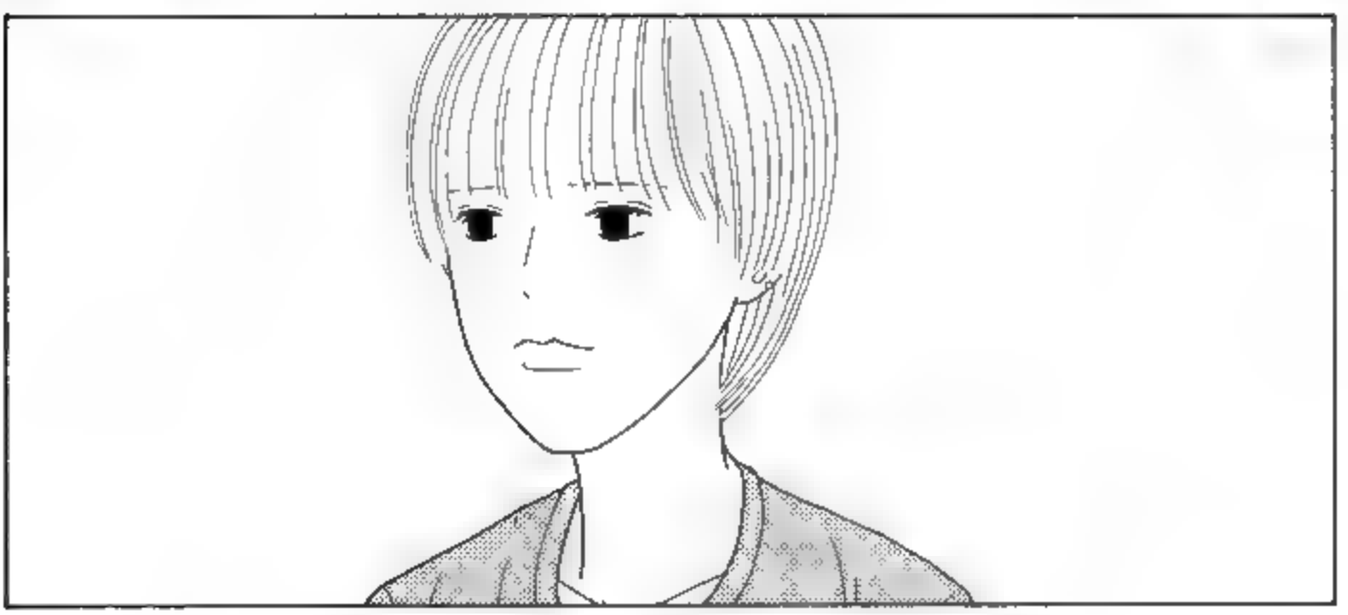

Niki is here with me right now,

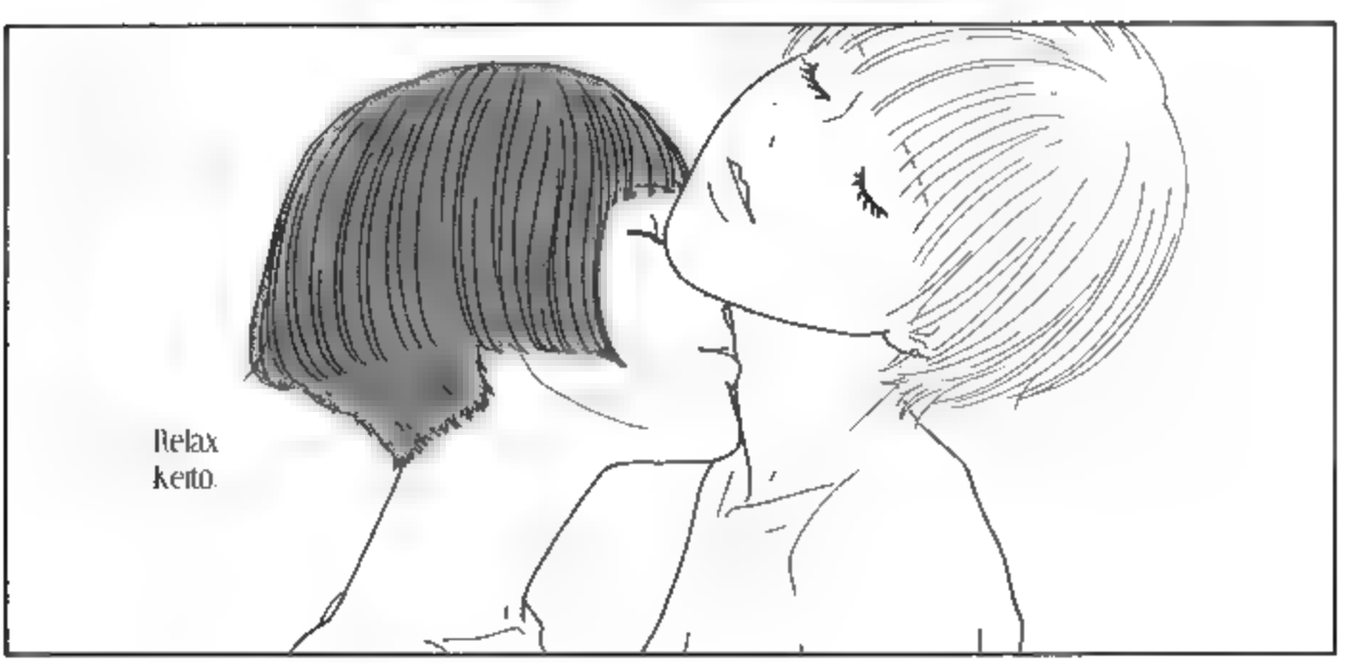

and that's enough

beep
beep
beep
beep
chirp
chirp
chirp
WHEN DID NIKI...
NIKI'S PHONE NUMBER...
THIS IS
NO, NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.
THANKS FOR WATCHING THINGS HERE WHILE I WAS GONE, KEITO. DID ANYTHING HAPPEN?

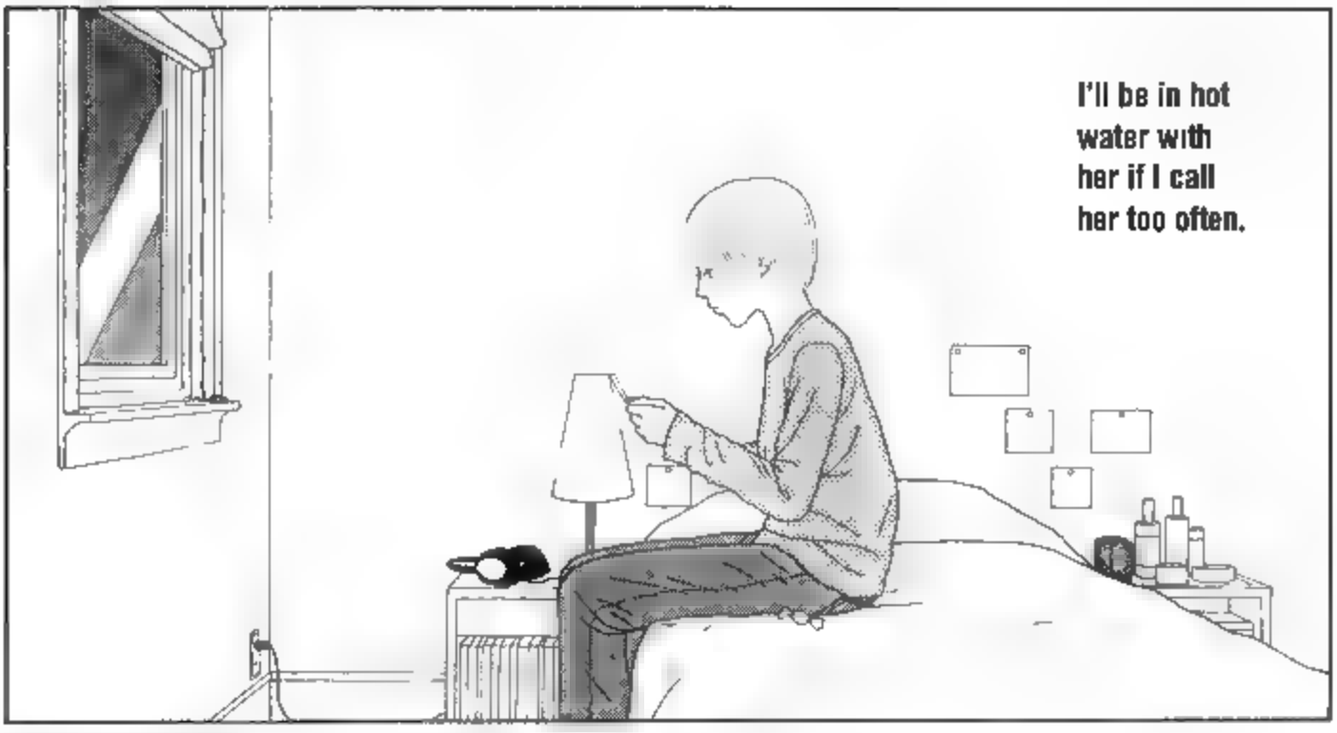
HIS AREA DOWN THERE SUDDENLY PERKED UP.
WHILE HE WAS POSING, SUMIHIKO MUST HAVE BEEN REMEMBERING THE WOMAN HE WAS INTIMATE WITH THE NIGHT BEFORE OR SOMETHING.
I GOT TO SEE "IT" JUST ONCE WHILE I WAS DOING THE ROUGH SKETCH.
YES?
DOES LOOK PRETTY MAGNIFICENT.
WELL, SUMIHIKO'S
MEN REALLY HAVE THE STRANGEST EQUIPMENT!
OH, YOU REALLY ARE. WHAT'S WRONG, KEITO?
YOU'RE BEET RED, KEITO ...
HUH!?
HERE'S YOUR FRUIT. SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING.

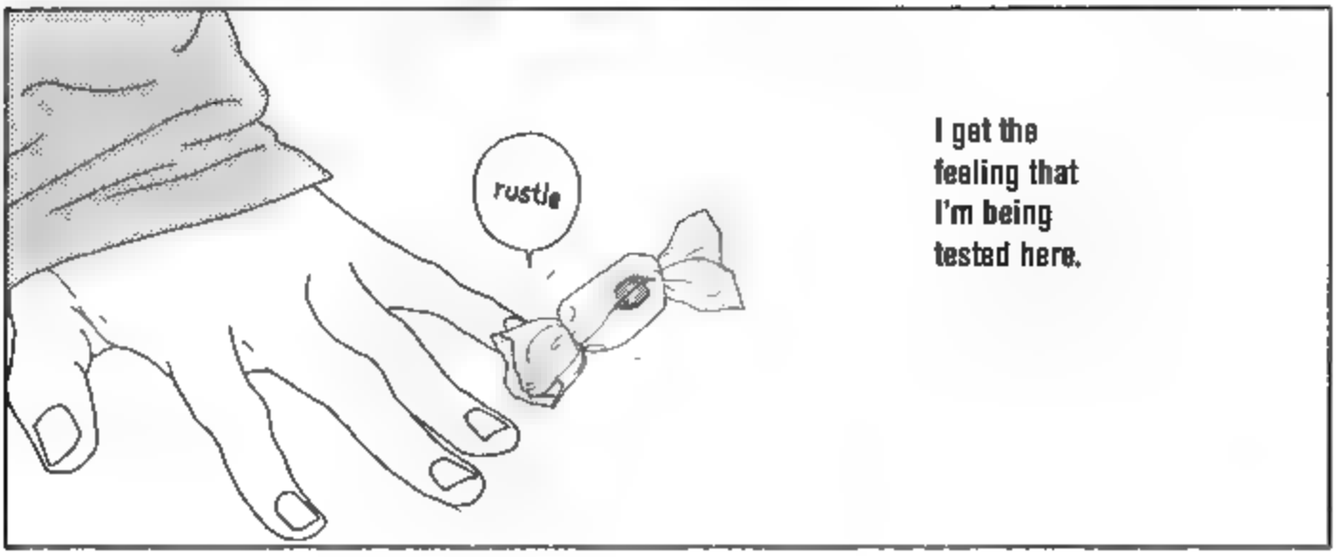


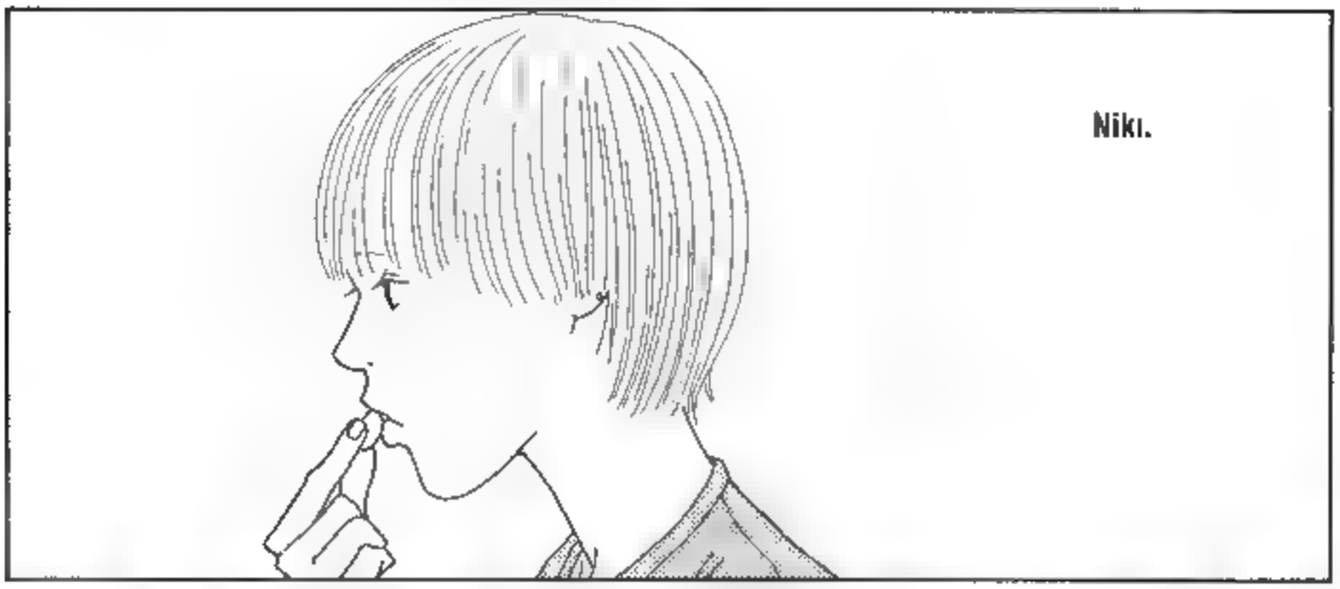


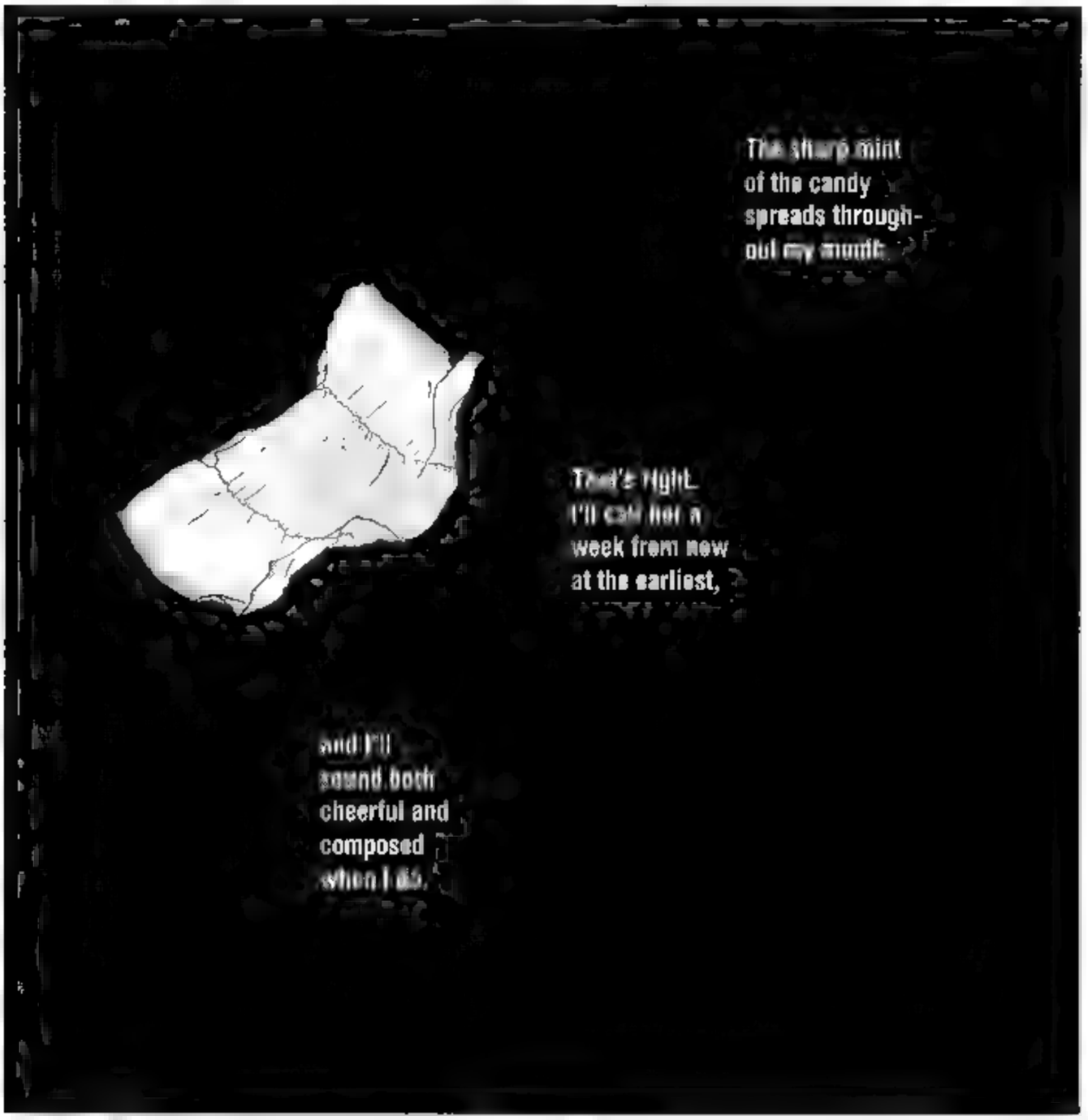

Relax
kento.

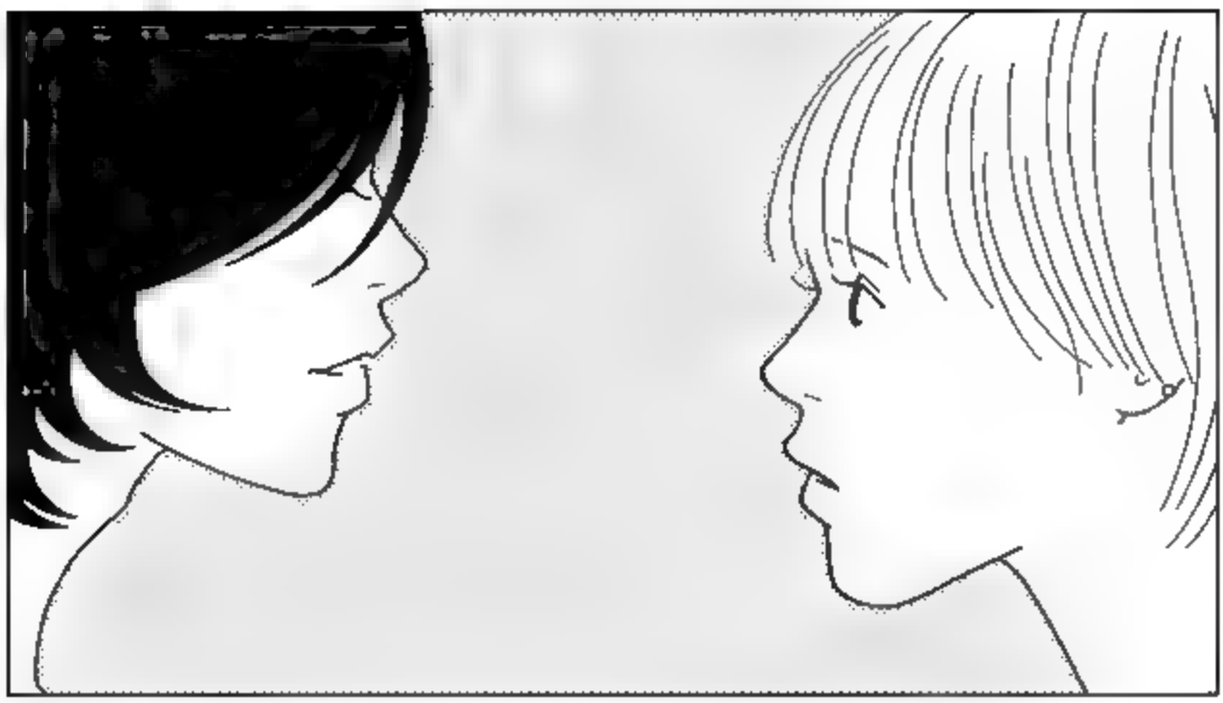
I can make you feel even better


I'll be in hot water with her if I call her too often.


rustle
I get the feeling that I'm being tested here.


Niki.


The sharp mint of the candy spreads throughout my mouth.
That's right. I'll call her a week from now at the earliest,
and I'll sound both cheerful and composed when I do.



Chapter 8 At Home

Angie.

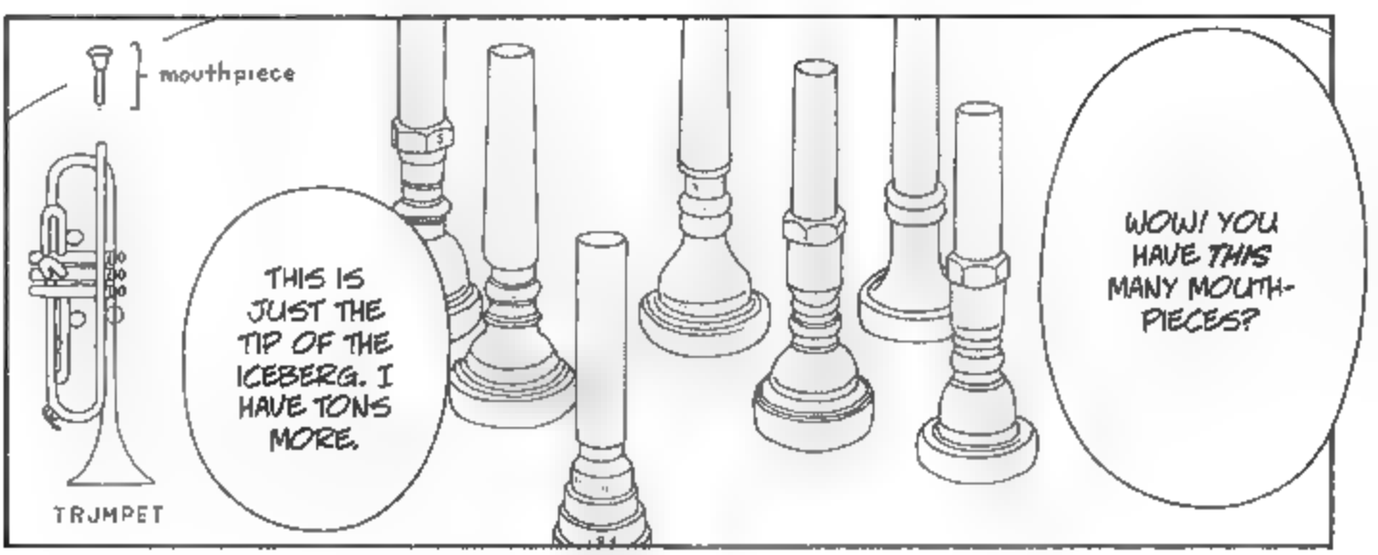
I've come up with a lot of plot ideas for my manga about you.

It'll be my first manga.

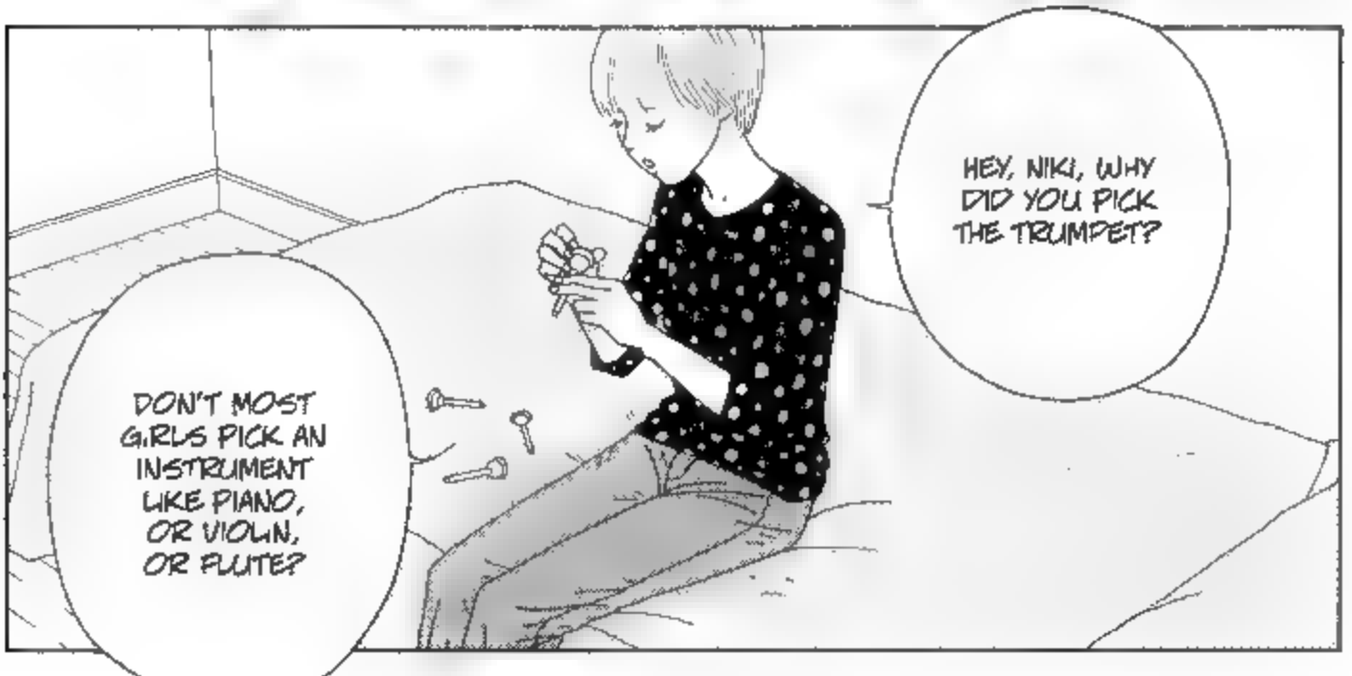
I have to start working on putting them together into one coherent story soon.

We've been using it as a place to have sex.

Niki rents another room apart from the one she lives in. She uses it to practice trumpet.



Note: These are the first four notes of a scale.



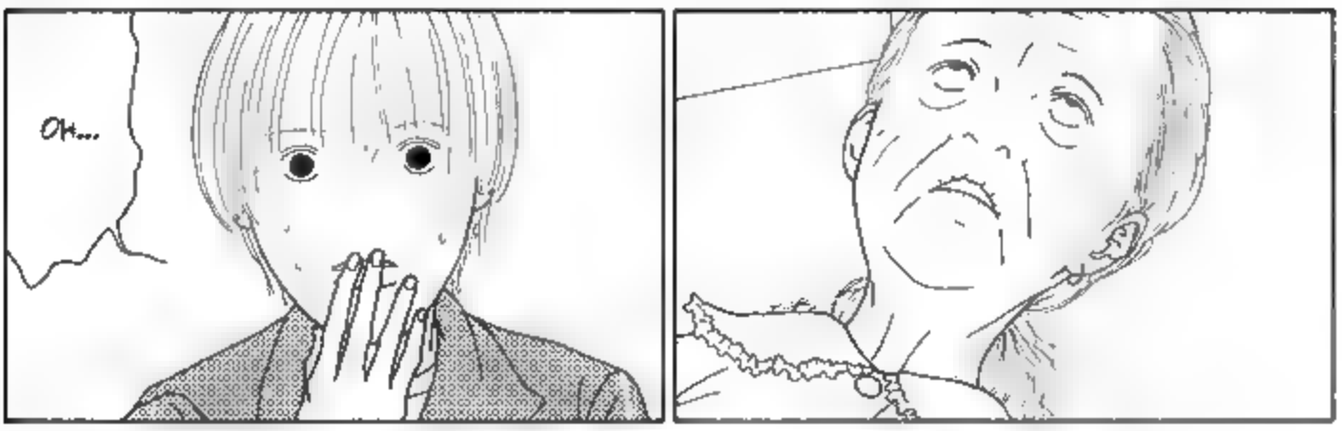
OHH?
SO THAT'S WHAT IT WAS!
IT WAS BECAUSE OF MY FATHER.
HE'S A JAZZ TRUM-PETER.
MY MOTHER'S BEEN LIVING WITH A YOUNGER MAN FOR QUITE SOME TIME NOW.
hehe
BEFORE I KNEW IT, HE AND MY MOTHER WERE GETTING A DIVORCE.
BUT HE WAS A DRIFTER. I HAVE VERY FEW MEMORIES OF LIVING WITH HIM.
He's been writing me twice a year since then.
The last time I saw my father I was ten years old.

SO THE RETURN ADDRESSES DON'T DO ME ANY GOOD.
MOVES RIGHT AFTER HE PUTS THE POSTCARDS IN THE MAIL,
hehe
HE NEVER REALLY WRITES ANYTHING DEEPER THAN "HOW ARE YOU DOING?"
HE PROBABLY
NO, KEEP GOING. I WANT TO HEAR MORE.
OH... WHY AM I TALKING ABOUT THIS?
OH.

YOU HAVE TO LOOK SEXIER THAN THAT, KEITO.
YOU'RE NOT MAKING ME WET AT ALL.

THUD!
DID SOME-THING HAPPEN ?
click
RUI-SAN? RUI-SAN?
knok knok
RUI-SAN?
WHAT WAS THAT?

RUI-SAN!


OH...

OKAY. I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!
RUI-SAN IS- SHE'S-
YOU HAVE TO COME RIGHT AWAY, SUMIHIKO-SAN!

RUI...

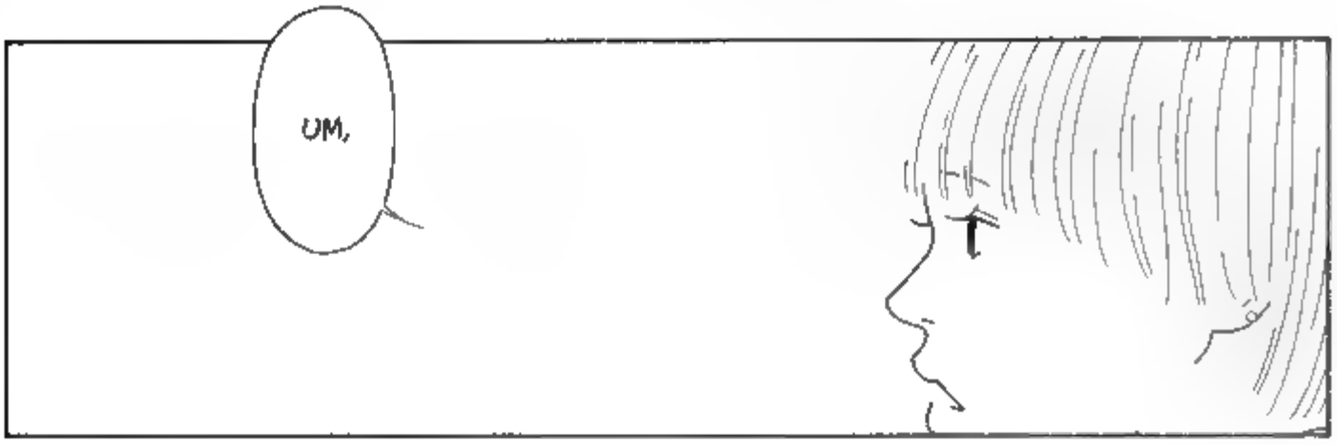
I JUST LOST MY FOOTING ON THE STEPLADDER AND ENDED UP WITH A MILD CONCUSSION. THAT'S ALL.
SORRY TO CALL YOU OVER SO LATE AT NIGHT, SUMIHIKO.

IF WE COME BACK IN THE MORNING TO FIND HER STONE-COLD, IT'LL BE TOO LATE.
SHE DID SAY IT'S JUST A MILD CONCUSSION, BUT SHOULDN'T WE TAKE HER TO THE HOSPITAL JUST IN CASE?
APPARENTLY RUI-SAN HIT THE BACK OF HER HEAD.

IT'S HER LAST CHANCE TO BEAT HER MOTHER AT SOMETHING.
RUI'S MOTHER DIDN'T GO UNTIL SHE WAS 98. RUI ISN'T GOING TO DIE UNTIL SHE OUTLIVES HER.
TO HER,
NOT FOR ANOTHER TEN YEARS AT THE LEAST.
RUI ISN'T GOING TO DIE ANYTIME SOON--
HUH?
SERIOUS!?
ARE YOU
OH...
DON'T WORRY, KEITO-SAN.
I'LL COME A LITTLE EARLY TOMORROW MORNING.

And Sumihiko made breakfast like always.

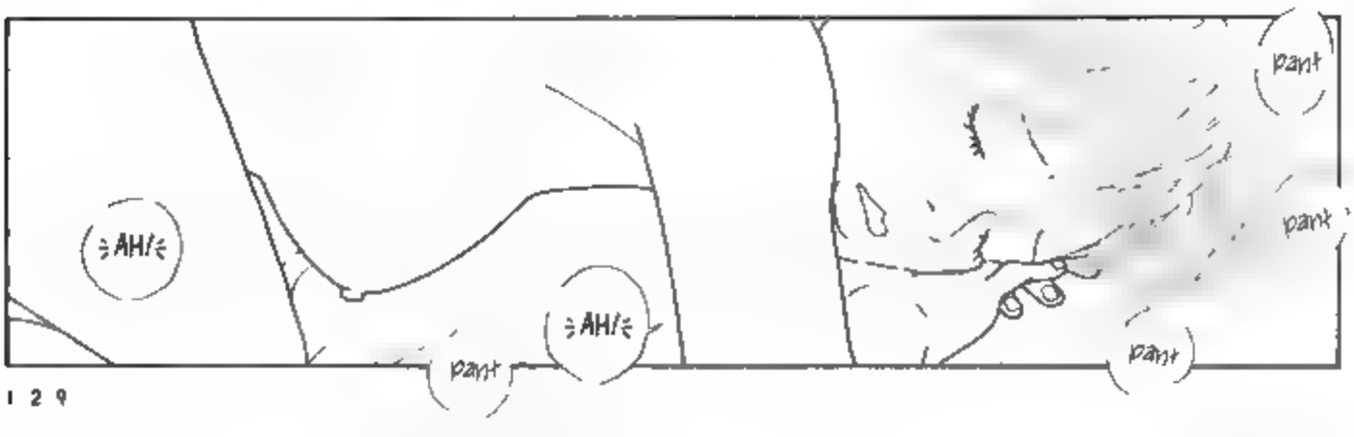
The next morning, Rui-san woke up just as usual, as if nothing had happened the night before.



IF YOU EVER NEED SOMETHING THAT'S HIGH UP, PLEASE LET ME KNOW. I'LL GET IT FOR YOU.
ALL RIGHT.
I'LL DO THAT FROM NOW ON.
BUT DON'T THINK I HAVE YOU HERE BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO TAKE CARE OF ME IN MY OLD AGE, KEITO.
THAT ISN'T WHAT YOU NEED TO DO HERE, ISN'T THAT RIGHT?
EVEN WITHOUT PEEPING THROUGH KEYHOLES,
I KNOW WHAT YOU'VE BEEN WORKING ON EVERY DAY.

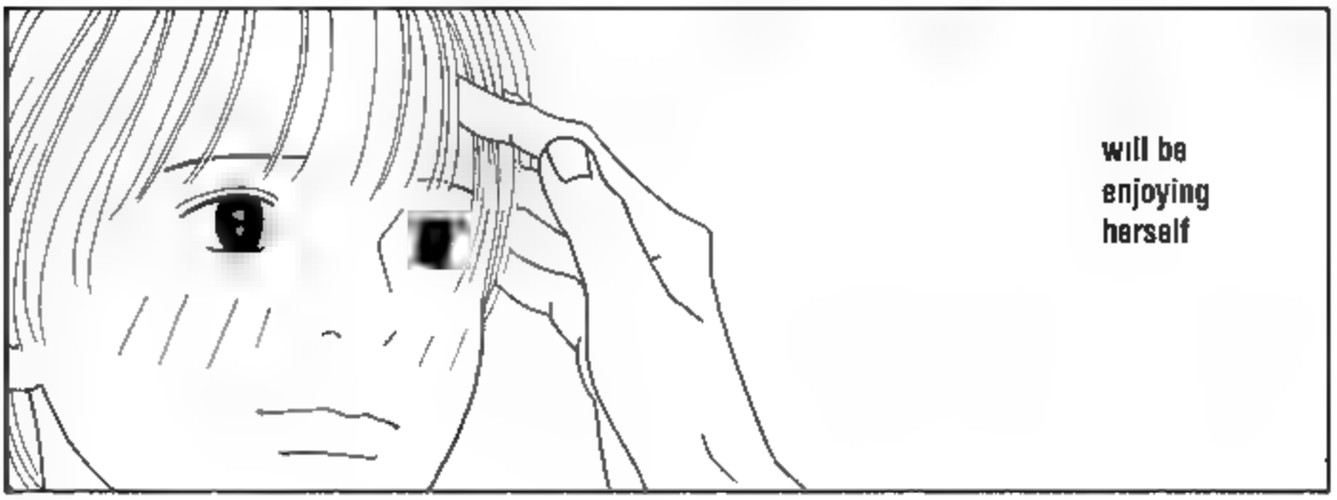
I DON'T WANT TO BE A BIG STAR OR ANYTHING.
ANGIE, YOU KNOW YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO SUCCEED AS A SINGER IF YOU COME OUT, DON'T YOU? DON'T BE NAIVE.
AND MY SONGS ARE LOVE SONGS FROM ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER, NO MATTER WHO'S LISTENING TO THEM.
A BUNCH OF THUGS BEAT THE CRAP OUT OF KENNY JUST FOR BEING GAY. HE'S GONNA BE IN A WHEELCHAIR FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE!
I'M SCARED FOR YOU.
ANGIE.
YEAH. LET'S PRAY FOR KENNY, EDDIE.

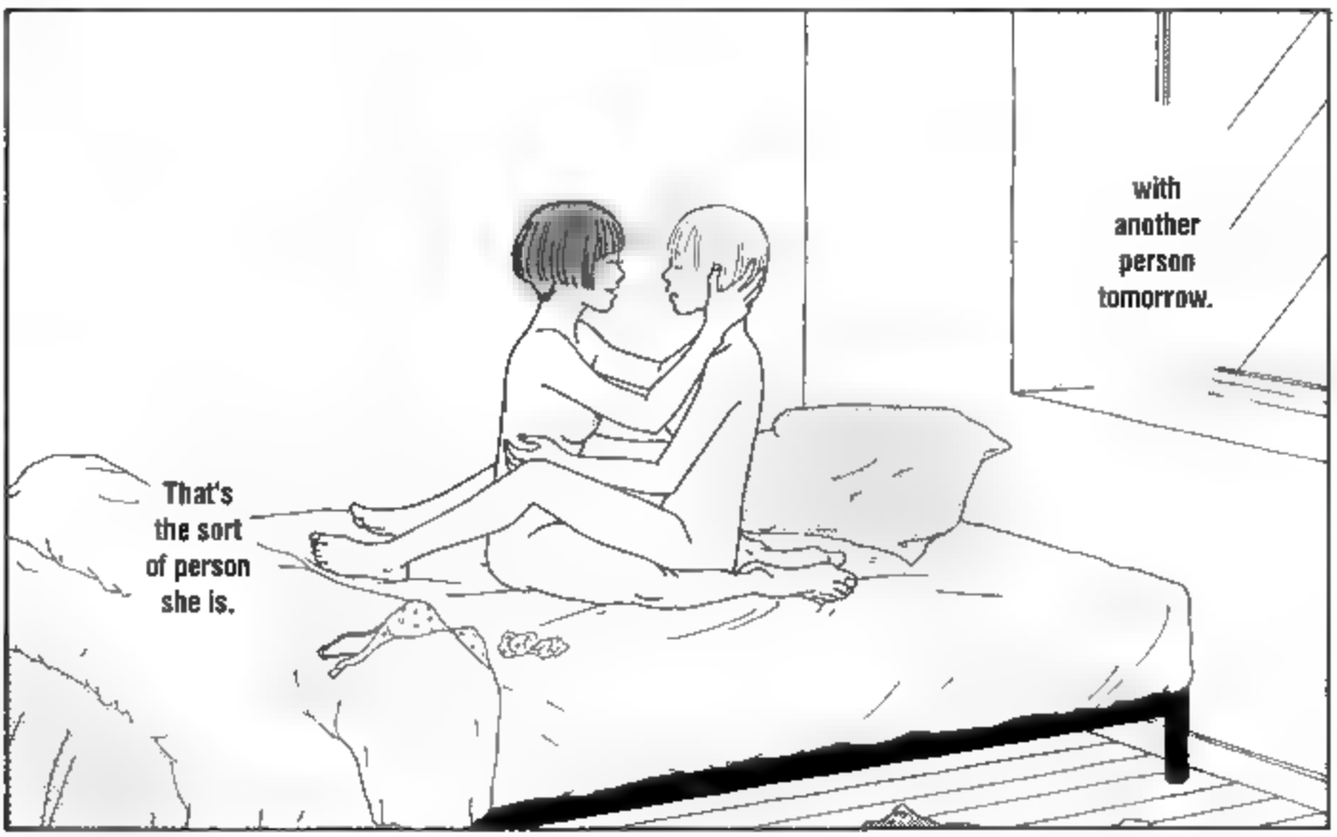
HOW CAN YOU BE SO TOUGH, ANGIE?
IT'S BECAUSE I HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE.
Because she has nothing to lose.


AH!
AH!
pant
pant
pant
pant

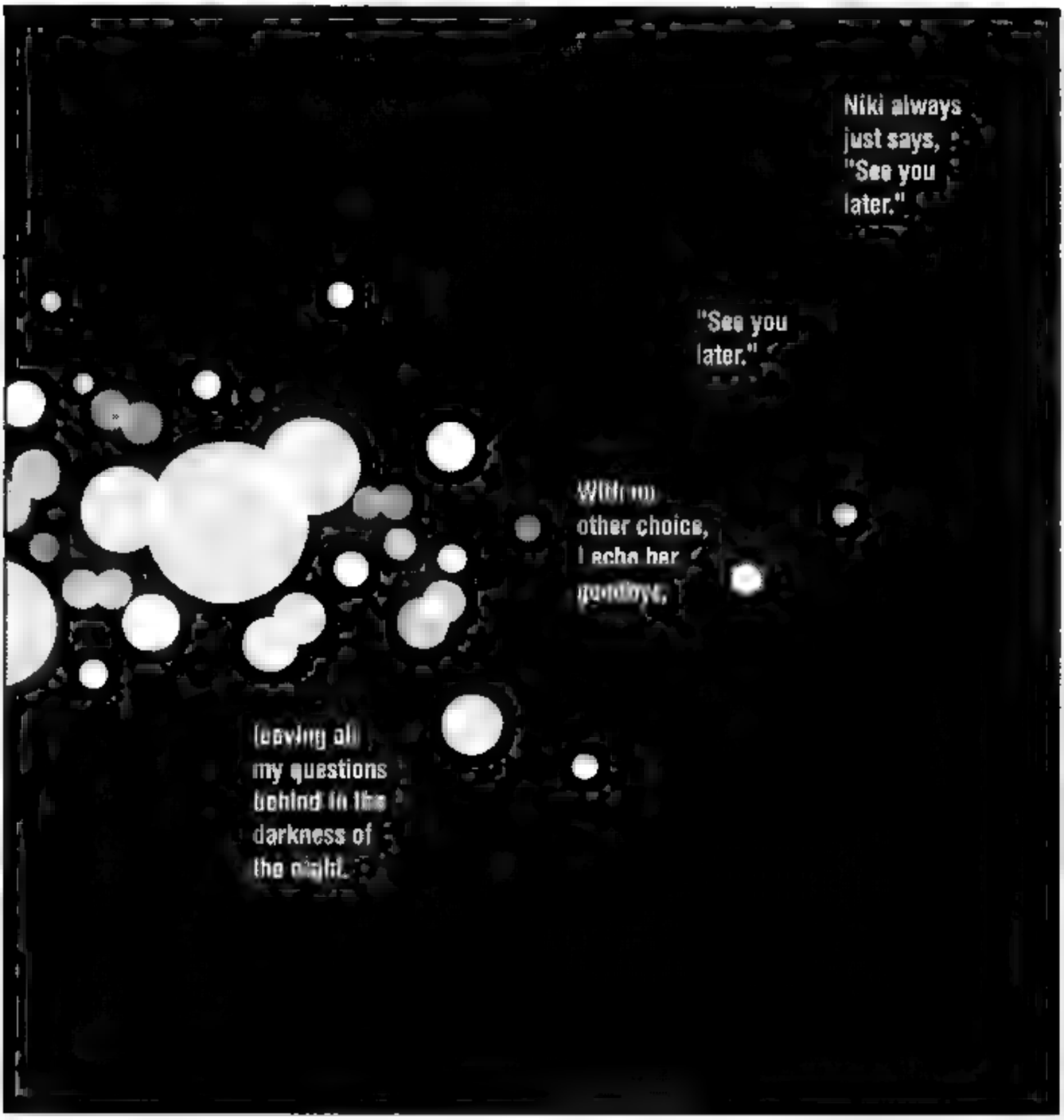
pant
pant
pant
≠AH!≠
pant
pant
pant
≠AH!≠
pant
pant
≠AH!≠
≠MM!≠
pant
pant
pant
pant
≠AHN≠
≠AH!≠
pant
≠AH!≠
pant
pant
AH...!

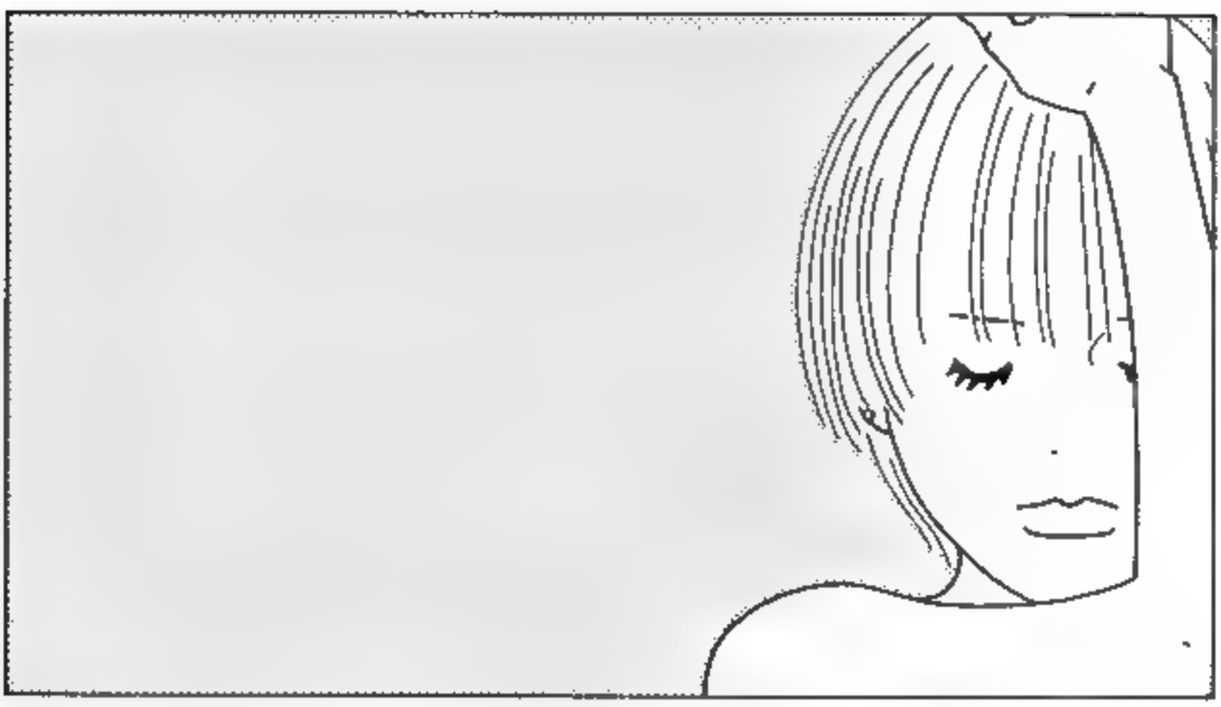
This
person


will be
enjoying
herself


with
another
person
tomorrow.
That's
the sort
of person
she is.

When we say goodbye, we don't make any concrete plans to get together again.

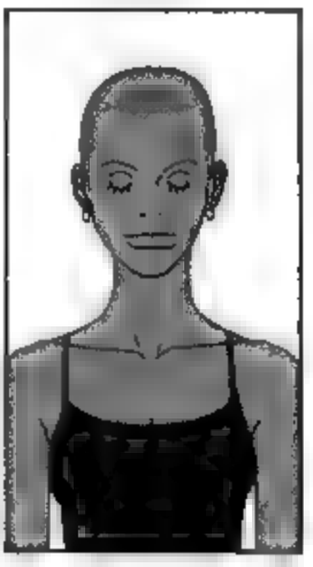

Niki always just says, "See you later."
"See you later."
With no other choice, I echo her goodbye.
leaving all my questions behind in the darkness of the night.



Chapter 9 Friday Night

Angie.

I've gotten to the point now where I'm splitting things up into frames, writing lines, and storyboarding.



My manga about you is beginning to take shape and become a tangible reality.

I have to really knuckle down now!

and I don't really want to be alone.

Today's Friday,

I spent yesterday evening with Niki.

♪ "DANCE FLOOR" ZAPP (1982)
OF COURSE! I LOVE THIS SONG!
HEY, BABE! YOU LIKE ZAPP?
THAT GUY'S TOO GOOD AT DANCING!
≒SIGH≒ THAT WAS FUN, BUT I'M THIRSTY NOW.
NIKI!

SORRY, PLEASE LET ME THROUGH!
HUH?

PLEASE, LET ME THROUGH!
THEY AREN'T HERE...

I SAW YOU AT A CLUB YESTERDAY, SUMIHIKO-SAN.
I SAW YOU LEAVING WITH A GIRL.
OH, YOU WERE THERE TOO, KEITO-SAN?
OH.
YEAH, YESTERDAY WAS AN ABERRATION.
I USUALLY JUST DRINK ALONE AND THEN GO HOME.
I THINK YOU'VE GOTTEN THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT ME, KEITO-SAN--

SSSHH
WENT BACK TO MY PLACE.
NO, WE
HUH?
SO YOU WENT TO A HOTEL
AFTER YOU LEFT LAST NIGHT?
APPARENTLY, SHE LIKES
A PAINTING I DID ON ONE OF THE WALLS.

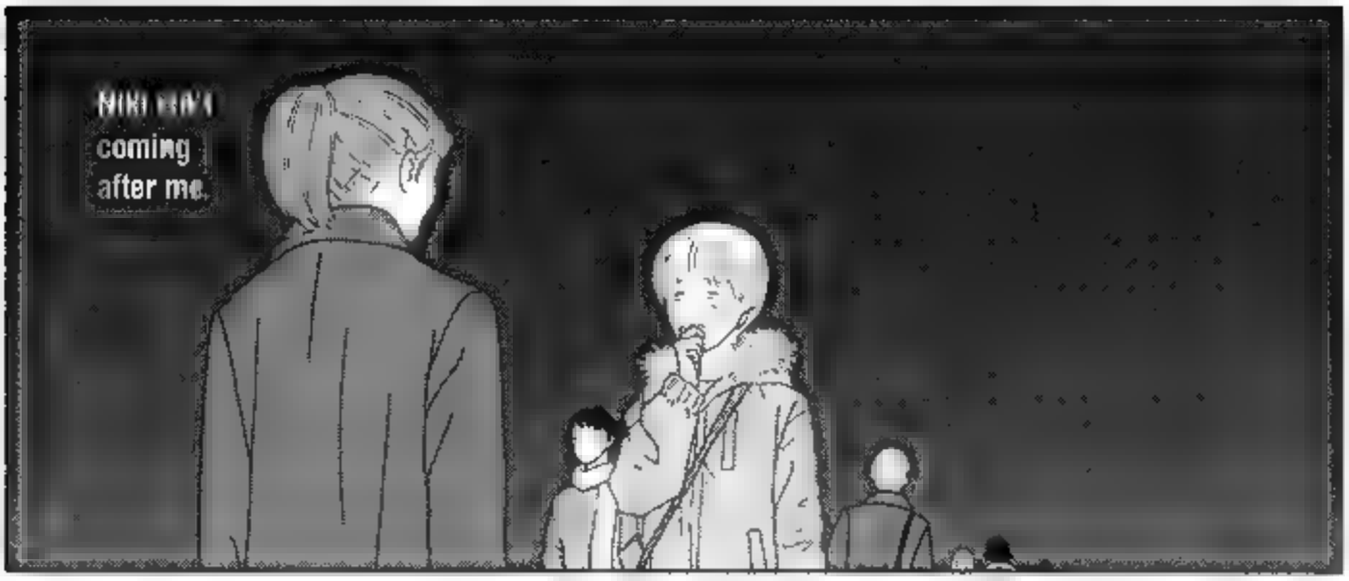
HEY, GIRL, TAKE A GOOD LOOK.
YOU DIDN'T GIVE ME ALL MY CHANGE!
I'M SORRY, TENCHOU. I'M FINE. I'LL BE MORE CAREFUL.
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU FEELING OKAY?
I- I'M TERRIBLY SORRY. UM...
I'M IN THAT ROOM.
HELLO, NIK?
CAN I COME OVER?
HUH? KEITO? WHAT IS IT?
WHERE ARE YOU RIGHT NOW?

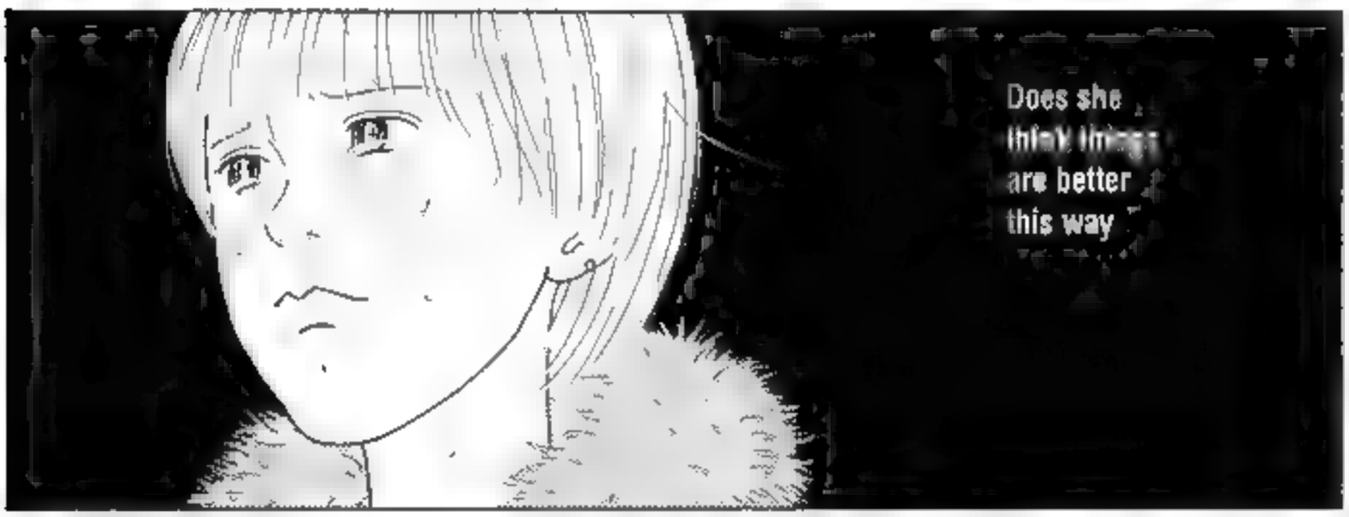
SORRY.
BUT I'M ABOUT TO GO MEET SOMEONE.
OH. I UNDER-STAND. SORRY TO CALL YOU LIKE THIS.
OH, HOLD ON, KEITO.
YOU CAN COME OVER.
I CAN WORK SOMETHING OUT IF IT'S JUST FOR AN HOUR OR SO.
I'LL BE WAITING.

I SAW YOU AT A CLUB YESTERDAY.
WANT SOMETHING TO DRINK? HOT COCOA?
THE GUY WHO WAS WITH YOU
HUH?
WORKS FOR RUI-SAN, THE WOMAN I'M STAYING WITH. DID YOU KNOW THAT?
IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE
THAT HE'S ALSO ONE OF THE PEOPLE YOU FOOL AROUND WITH.
I HAD NO IDEA.
HE'S JUST SOMEONE I SEE AT THAT CLUB ONCE IN A WHILE.
AND HE'S NOT REALLY ONE OF THE PEOPLE I FOOL AROUND WITH ALL THE TIME.

WHAT?
IT'S OVER.
I'M GOING TO LOOK FOR
A SERIOUS PERSON, SOMEONE WHO'S WILLING TO BE MY GIRLFRIEND.
IT'S OVER BETWEEN US. I'M NOT GOING TO SEE YOU ANYMORE, NIKI.
YOU'RE RIGHT, THAT'S FOR THE BEST. I'M SURE YOU'LL FIND SOMEONE RIGHT AWAY.
KEITO.

YOU'RE ABLE TO SAY THAT SO EASILY.
SO THAT'S THE EXTENT OF YOUR FEELINGS FOR ME.
YOU DON'T EVEN CARE
Sob
WHETHER I'M THERE OR NOT-!
KEITO!


coming
after me.


Does she
are better
this way

too—?

NO, THANK YOU.
OH, WELCOME HOME.
DO YOU WANT DINNER?
NOTHING.
WHAT'S WRONG?

There's no way I can pretend that I didn't
see them together like that.

Bye-bye,
Niki.

And
farewell...
to my one-
sided love.

Chapter 10 Heartbreaker

Angie.

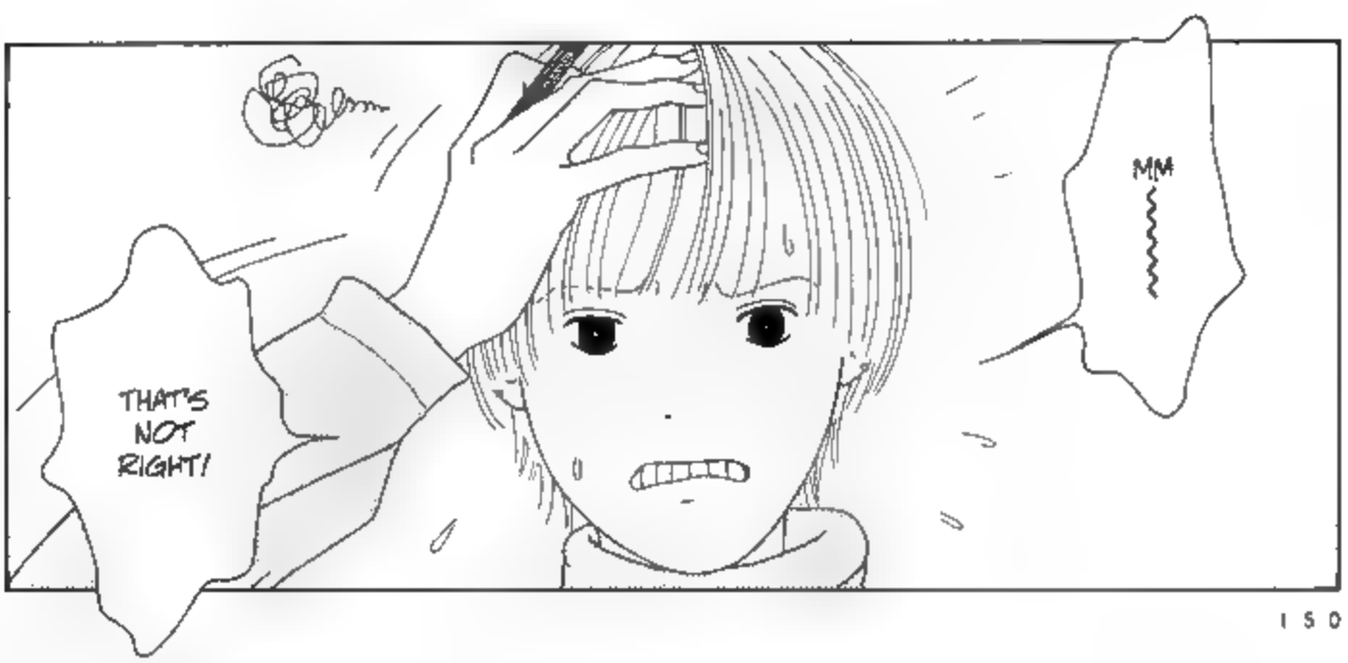
The day before yesterday, I bought paper to use for the manuscript.

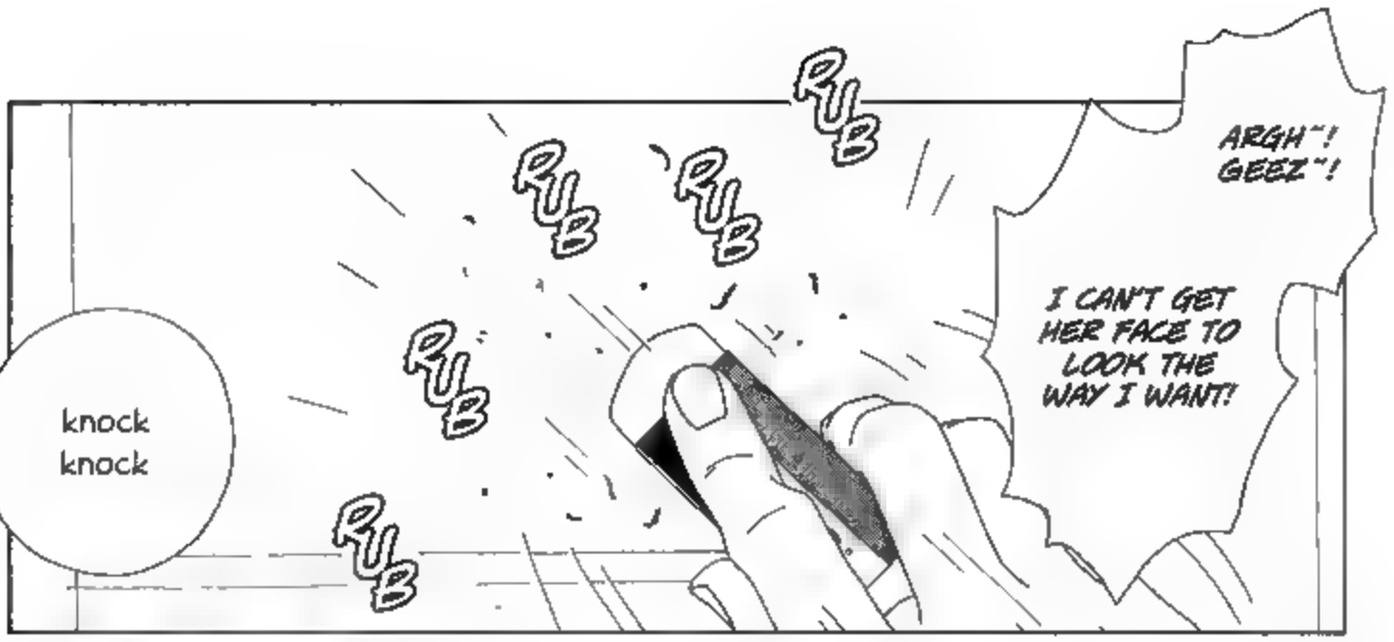
I want to focus on getting the rough sketches done right now.

No matter what happens, of course I'm going to finish your manga.

Because my time is precious, I'm still depending on Sumihiko for all my meals, even though I have mixed feelings towards him right now.

I was really busy around New Year's—helping Rui-san out with a party, receiving invitations from her acquaintances, things like that.

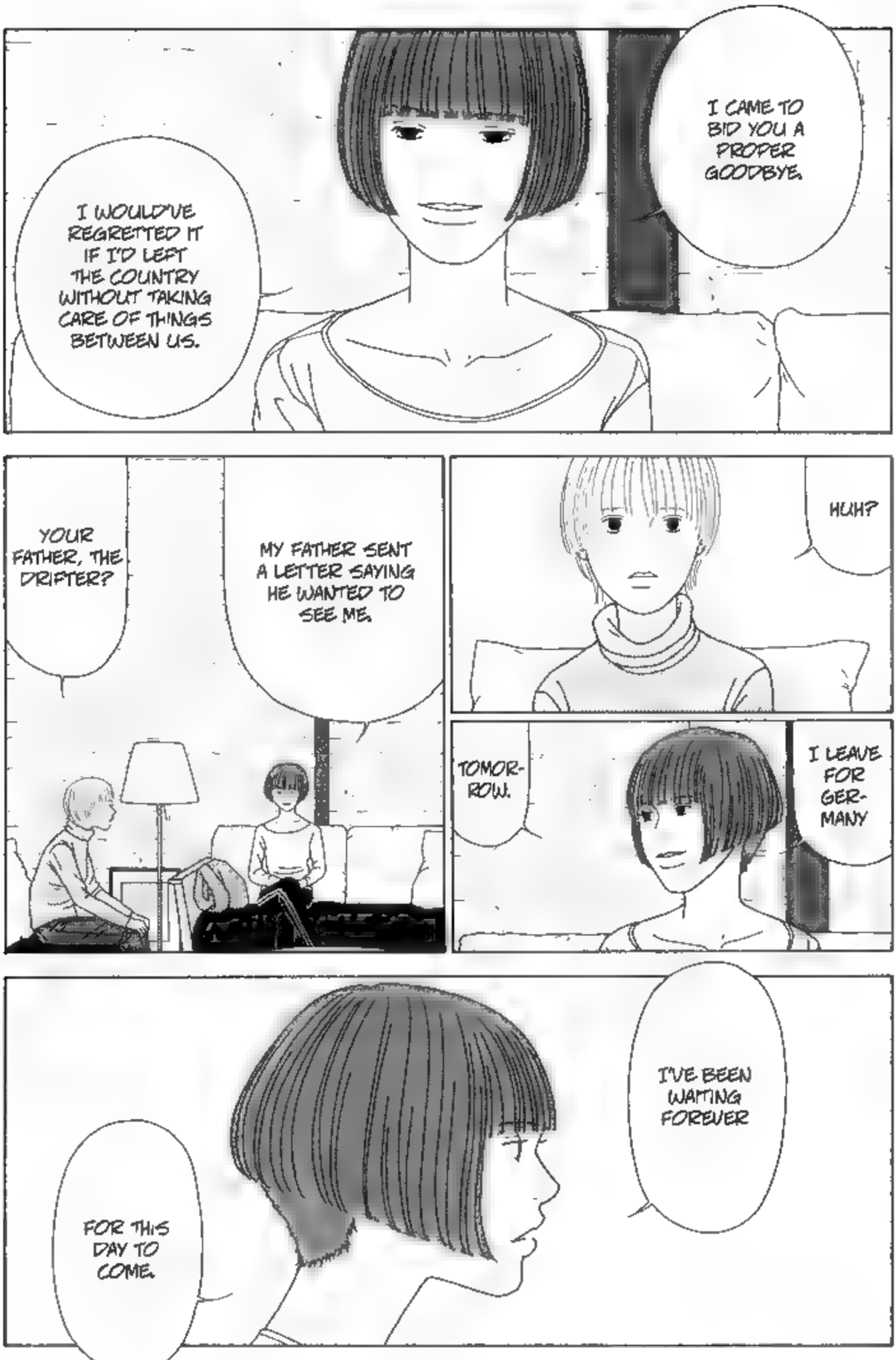



knock
knock
RUB
RUB
RUB
RUB
RUB
ARGH~!
GEEZ~!
I CAN'T GET HER FACE TO LOOK THE WAY I WANT!

THERE'S SOMEONE HERE TO SEE YOU, KEITO-SAN.
YES?

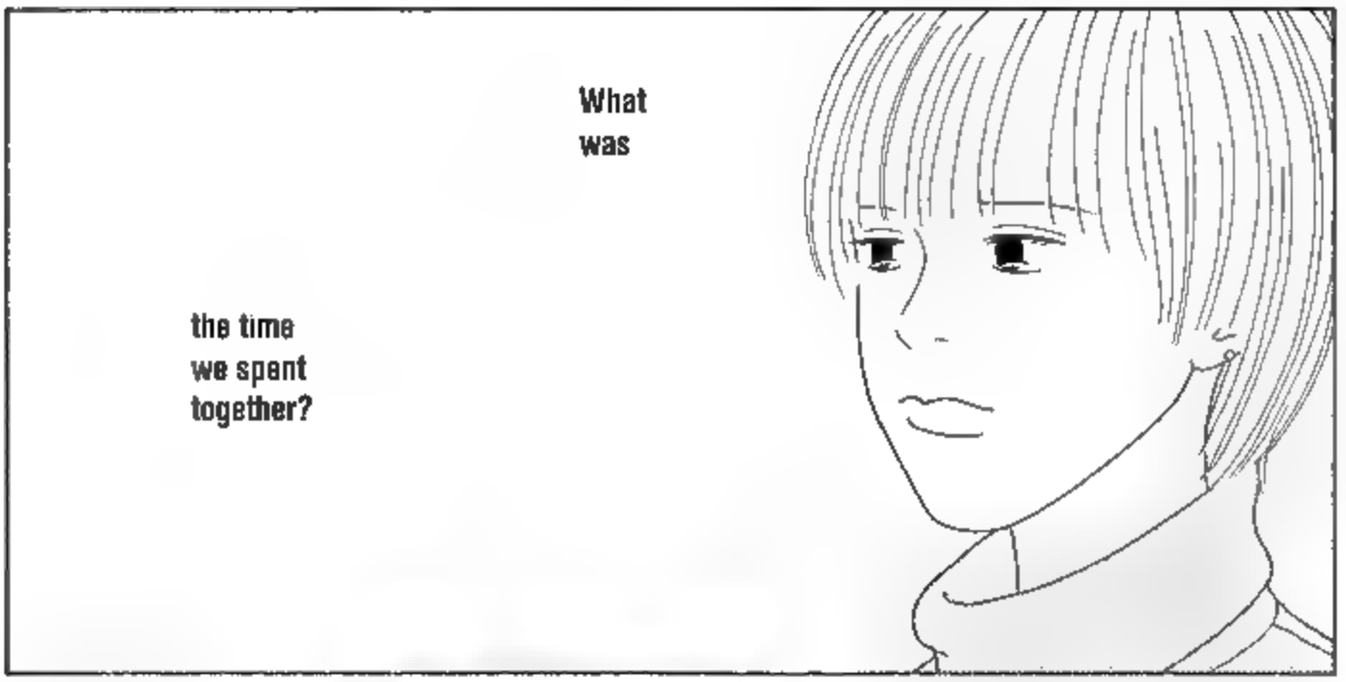
NIKI.

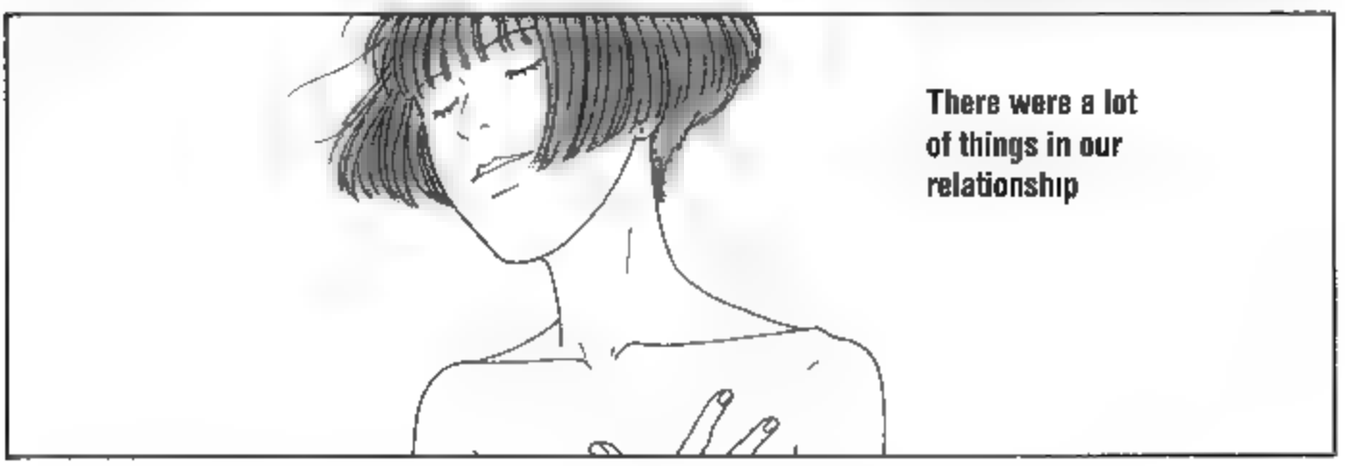
I'M GOING TO THE STUDIO NOW.
YOU TWO TAKE YOUR TIME.
I WENT TO JOE'S RECORD,
AND THEY TOLD ME YOU WERE OFF RIGHT NOW.
A LITTLE.
DID YOU TALK TO HIM ABOUT IT?
WAS HE SUR-PRISED?
YEAH, HE WAS PRETTY SUR-PRISED.
WHY ARE YOU HERE?


I CAME TO BID YOU A PROPER GOODBYE.
I WOULD'VE REGRETTED IT IF I'D LEFT THE COUNTRY WITHOUT TAKING CARE OF THINGS BETWEEN US.
YOUR FATHER, THE DRIFTER?
MY FATHER SENT A LETTER SAYING HE WANTED TO SEE ME.
HUH?
TOMOR-ROW.
I LEAVE FOR GER-MANY
I'VE BEEN WAITING FOREVER
FOR THIS DAY TO COME.

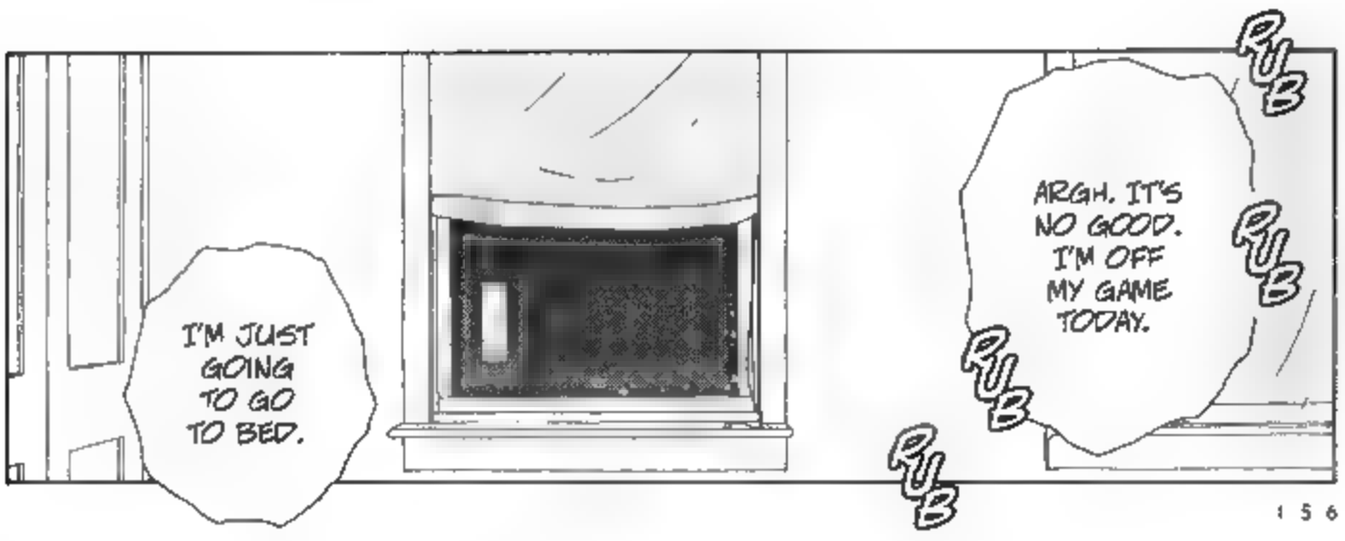
THE GUYS I'VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH HAVE ALL JUST BEEN LIKE STAND-INS FOR MY FATHER.
BUT I CAN FINALLY BE HELD BY THE REAL THING NOW.
KEITO.
NIKJ.
THANK YOU FOR LOVING ME.
IT MADE ME VERY HAPPY.

I HOPE SOMEONE WILL COME ALONG SOMEDAY WHO'LL CHERISH YOU, KEITO. TAKE CARE.
NIKI.
ARE YOU AND YOUR FATHER GOING TO LIVE TOGETHER LIKE LOVERS?
A FATHER ISN'T LIKE A BOYFRIEND.
hehe
GOODBYE, KEITO.





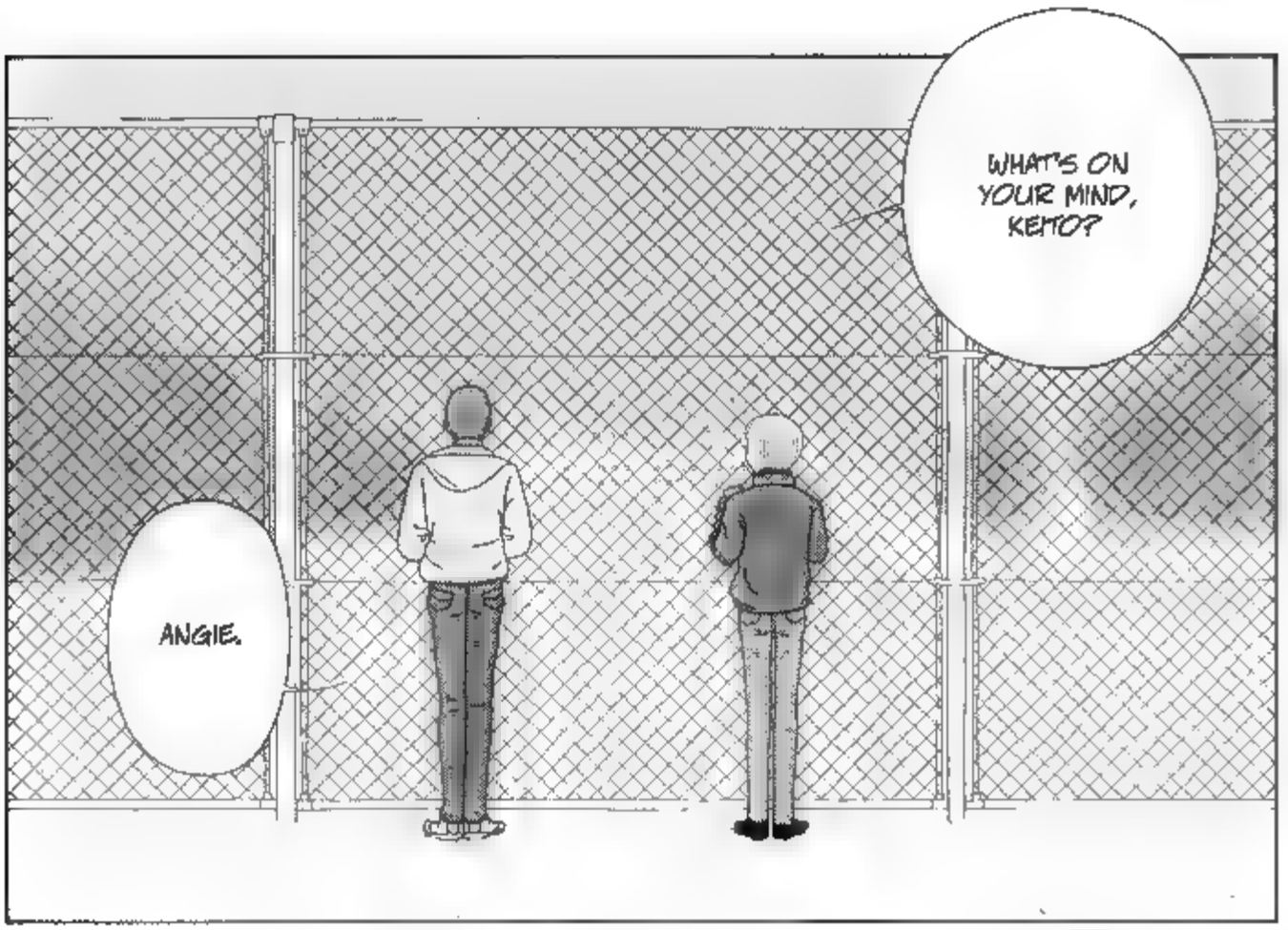
that were more
important than
sex, but..

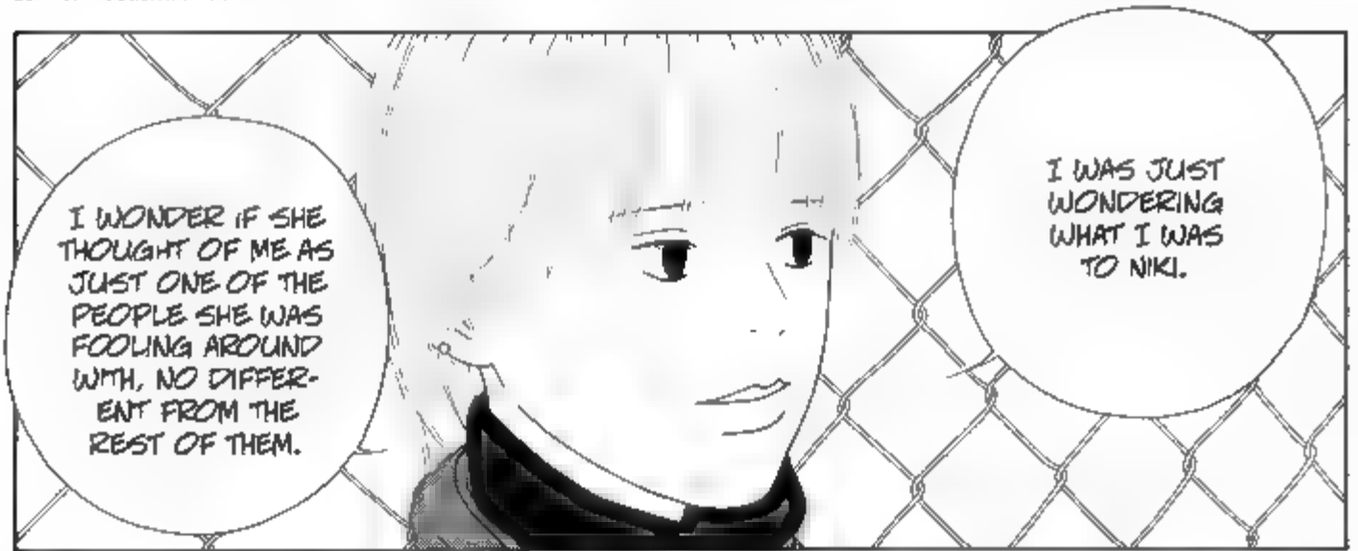


SUMIHIKO-SAN.
OH, YOU'RE RIGHT, I SHOULD GET GOING.
I'M JUST A LITTLE DRUNK.
YOU'RE STILL HERE? IT'S MIDNIGHT.
HUH?

WOULD YOU
BE WITH ME TONIGHT? JUST THIS ONCE?
SUMIHIKO-SAN!
AREN'T YOU LONELY? YOU'RE ALL ALONE.
YOU'RE RIGHT, YOU'RE NOT THE ONE I WANT EITHER. BUT THE PERSON I WANT ISN'T HERE ANYMORE.
EVEN IF I AM LONELY,
YOU'RE NOT THE ONE I WANT.

THE GIRL WHO WAS HERE TODAY SORT OF REMINDS ME OF HER.
SHE'S IN AMERICA NOW, ENJOYING A SUCCESSFUL CAREER AS AN ARTIST.
WHY DON'T YOU JUST BUY A BIG TEDDY BEAR?
THINK PEOPLE ARE?
WHAT DO YOU ALL
SORRY. I'LL GO.

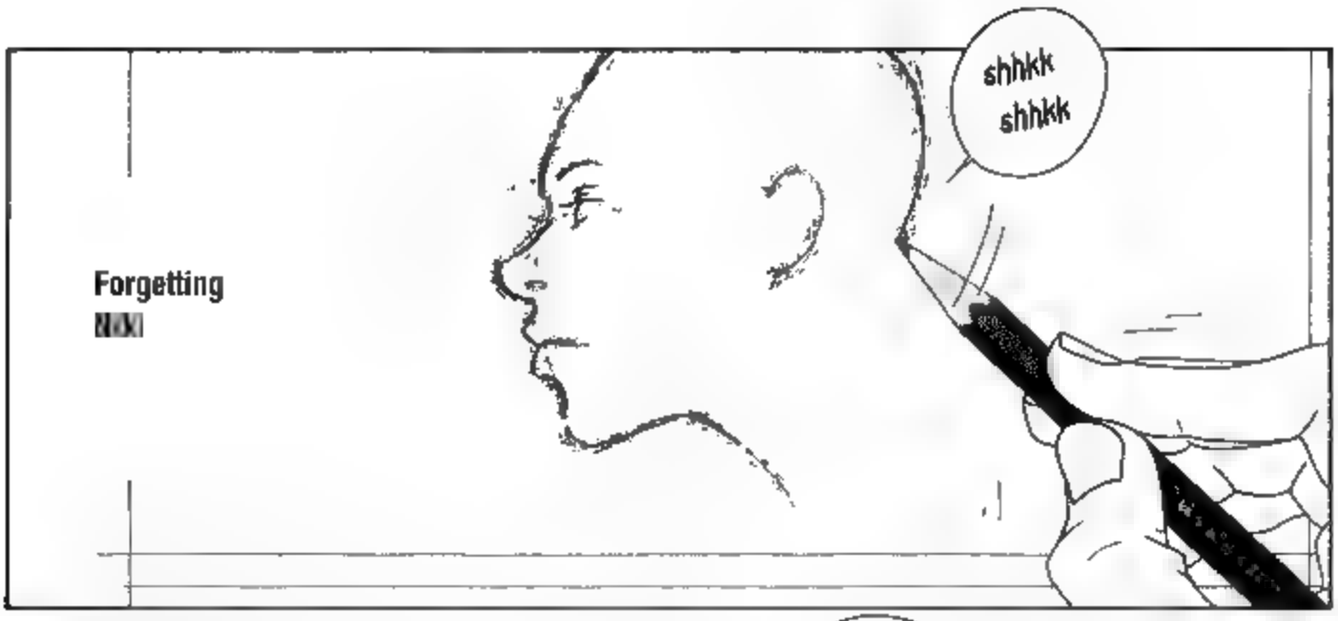

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, KEITO?
ANGIE.


I WONDER IF SHE THOUGHT OF ME AS JUST ONE OF THE PEOPLE SHE WAS FOOLING AROUND WITH, NO DIFFERENT FROM THE REST OF THEM.
I WAS JUST WONDERING WHAT I WAS TO NIKI.

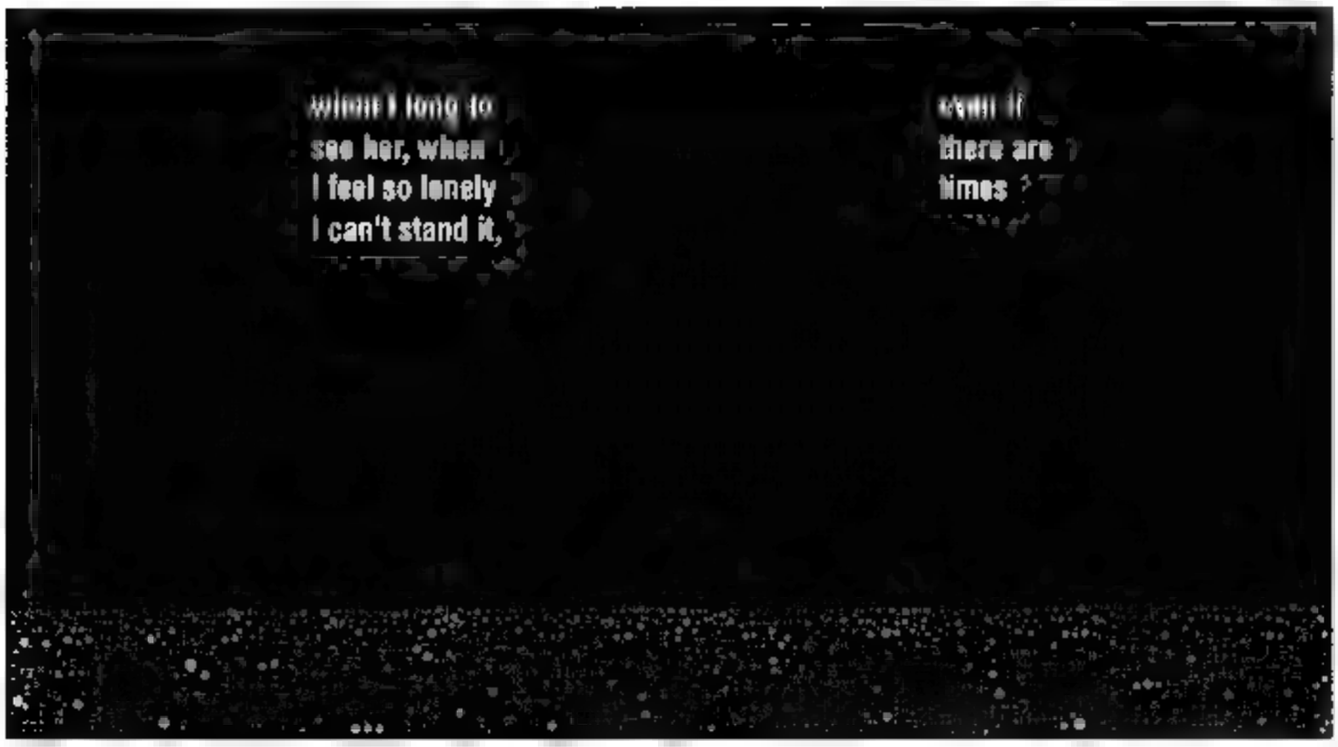
YOU TOLD HER YOU DIDN'T CARE WHAT SORT OF RELATIONSHIP YOU HAD AS LONG AS YOU GOT TO SPEND TIME WITH HER.
SO YOU WERE HOPING FOR SOMETHING ELSE?

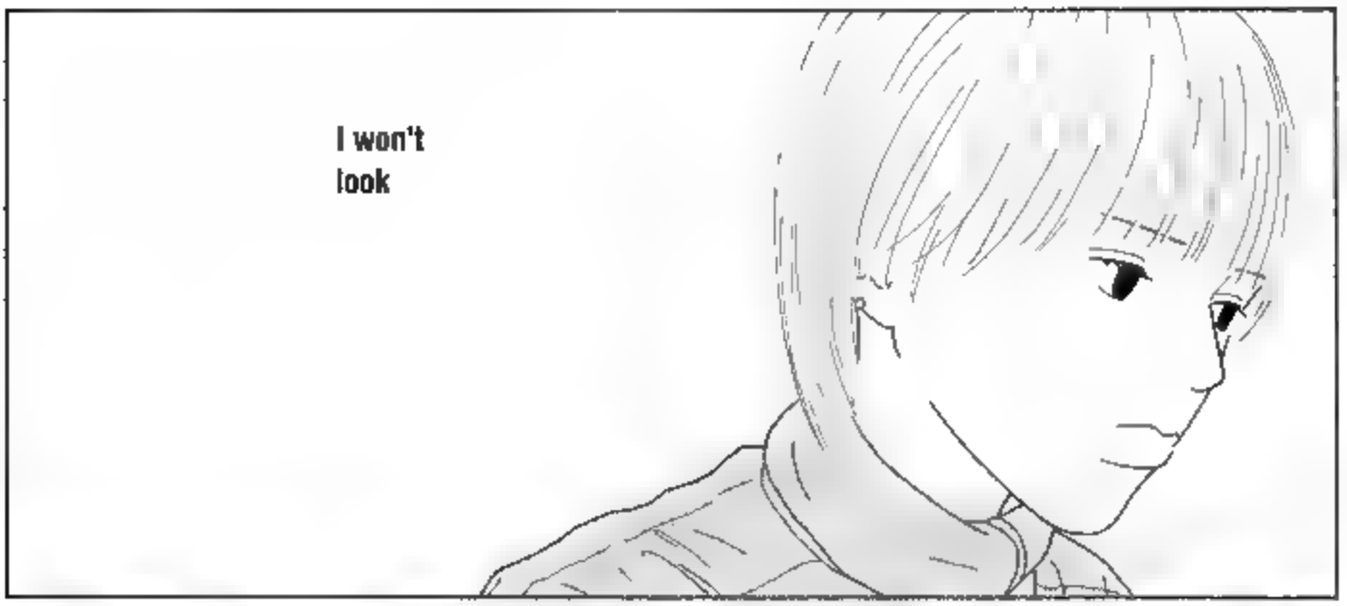
DID YOU ENJOY THE TIME YOU SPENT WITH HER?
I DID.
AND NIKI? DID SHE LOOK LIKE SHE WAS ENJOYING HERSELF?
I THINK SO.
YEAH.
THEN THAT'S A WONDERFUL THING, ISN'T IT?
NO MORE CRYING FROM NOW ON, KEITO.
AND MAKE ME COOL!

YOU'RE BOTH LOOKING GLOOMY FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. SAY SOMETHING.
DID YOU DO SOMETHING TO KEITO, SUMIHIKO?
.....
.....
NO, NOTHING.
WHAT?
I DIDN'T DO ANYTHING!
YOU'RE A REAL PAIN.


shhkk
shhkk
Forgetting
Yuki

rub
rub
rub
won't be
easy.
But


see her, when
I feel so lonely
I can't stand it,
there are
times


I won't
look

for a substitute,
for someone
who reminds
me of her.
MONO
Because it
wouldn't
be her.

Chapter 11 Talk to You

Angie.

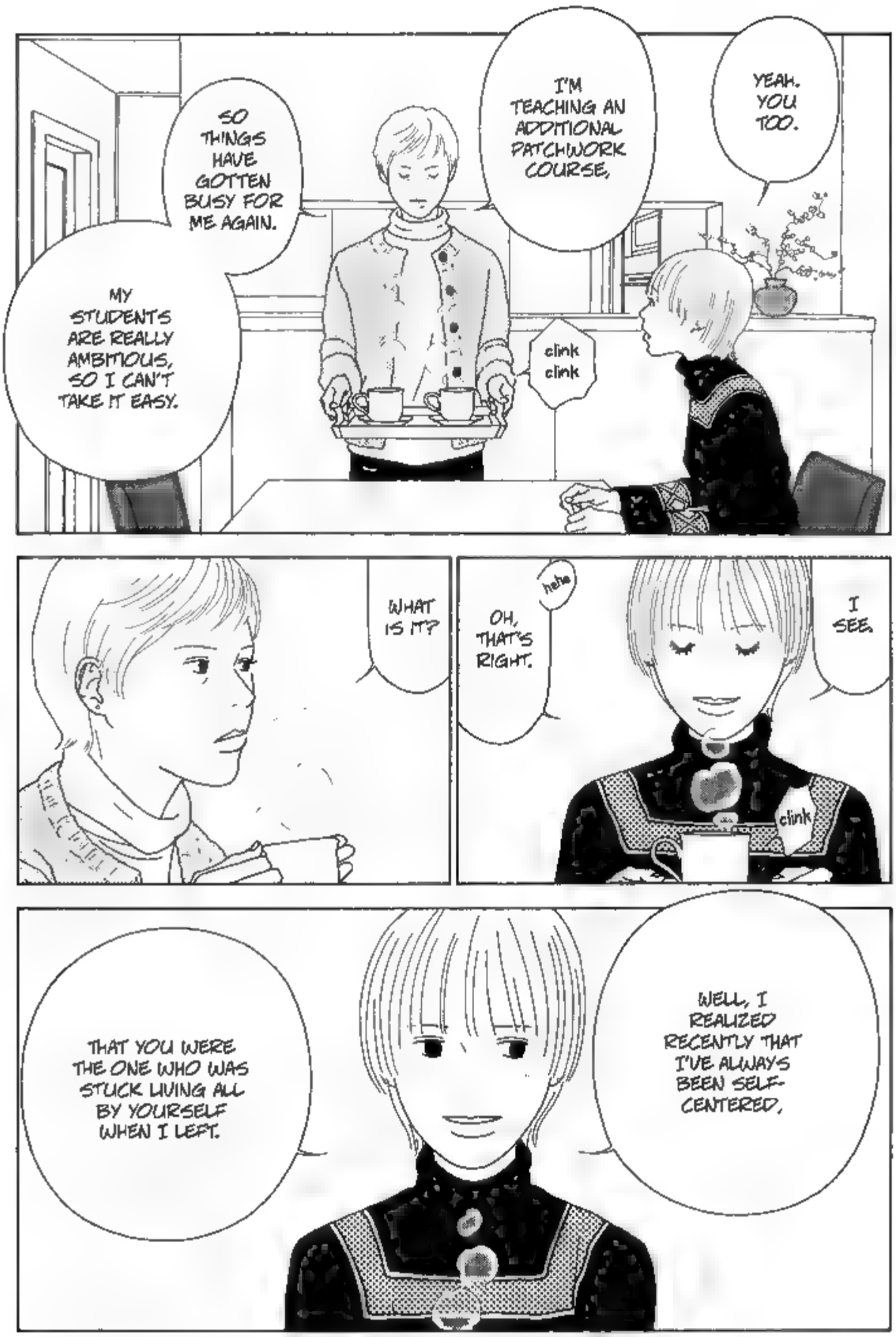
I thought of you long before I ever met Niki.

I'll be finished with the rough sketches for the manga soon.

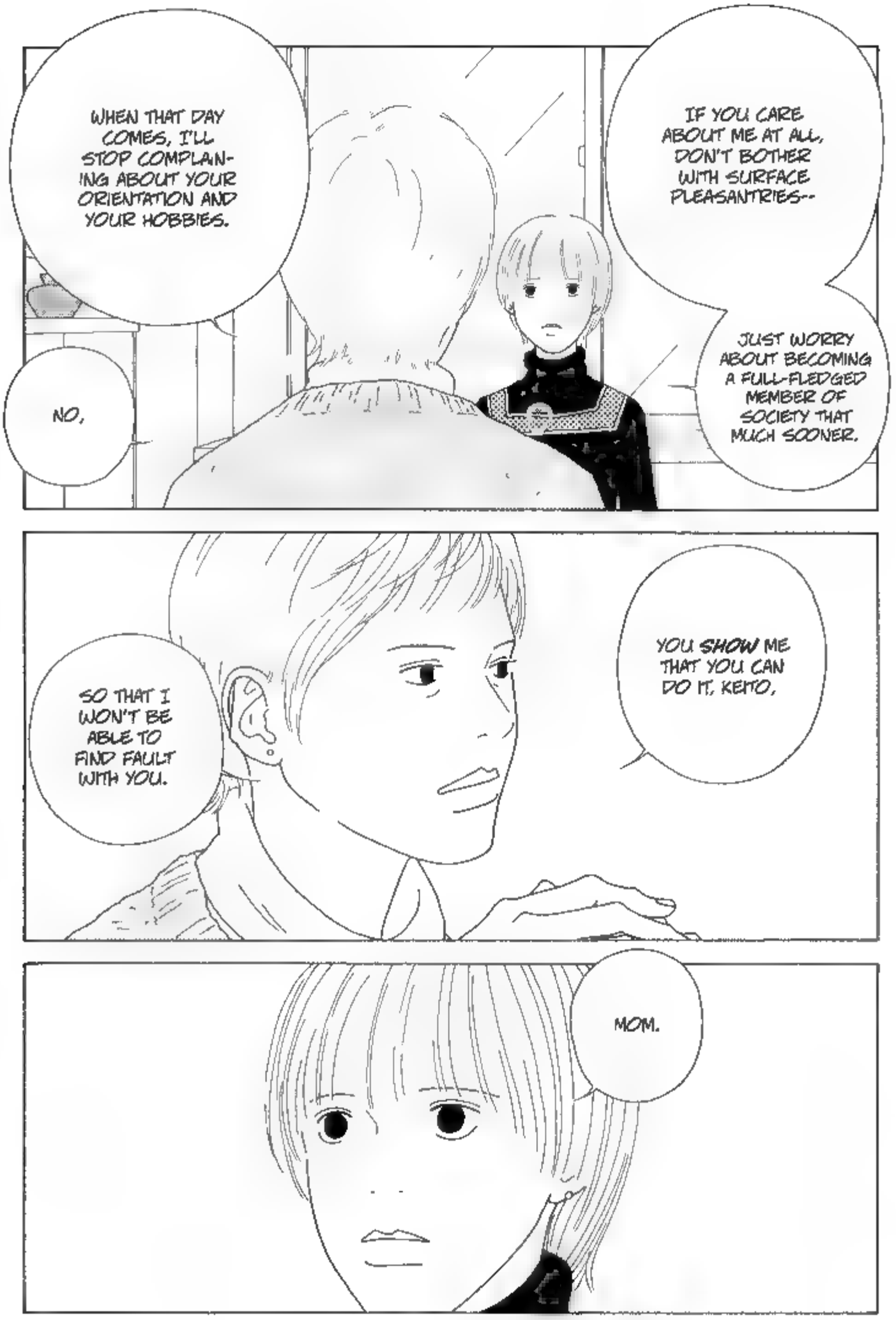
I won't slack off until they're done.

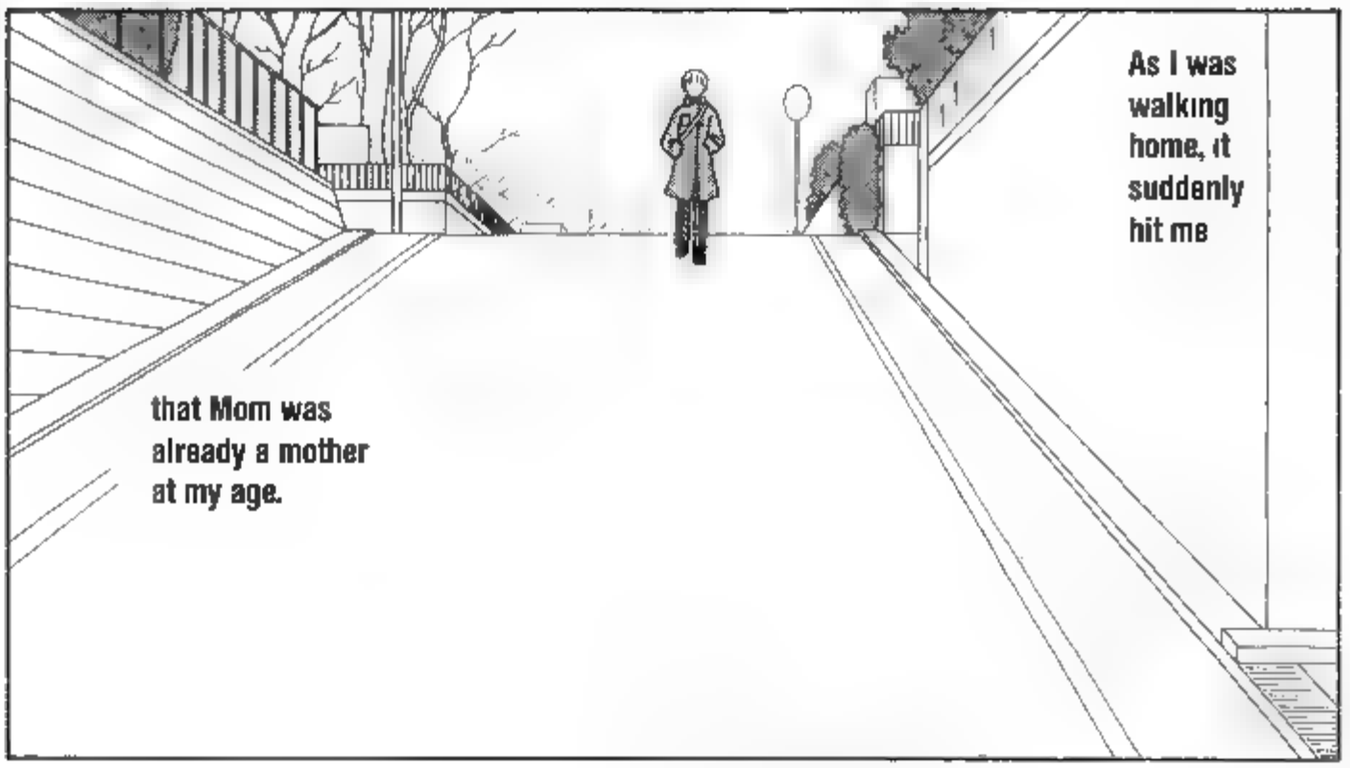
I rang the doorbell, my head held high, and my mother let me in without any protests.

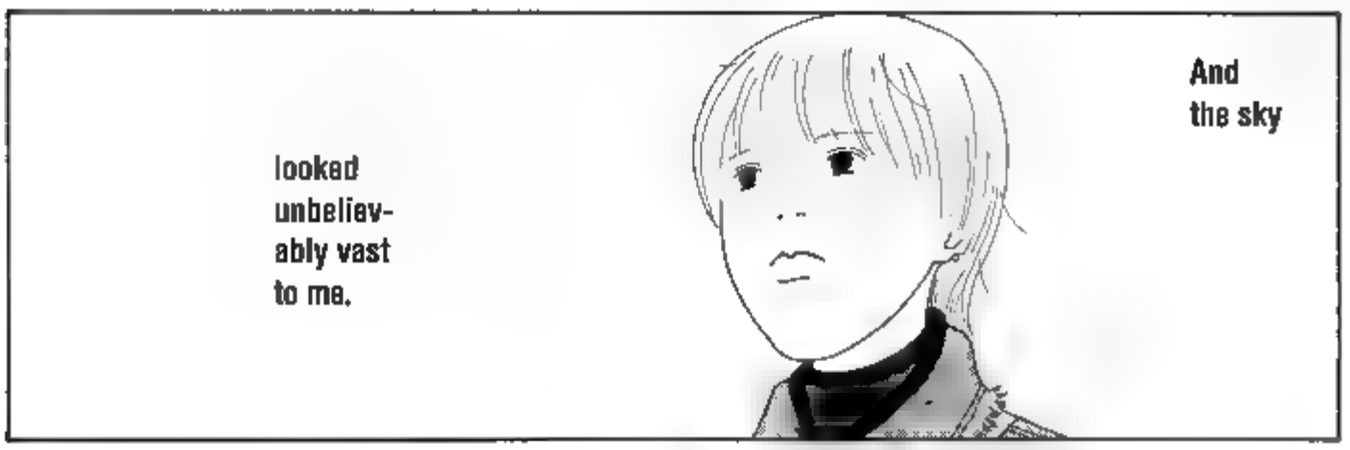
I visited my parents' home for the first time in a while.

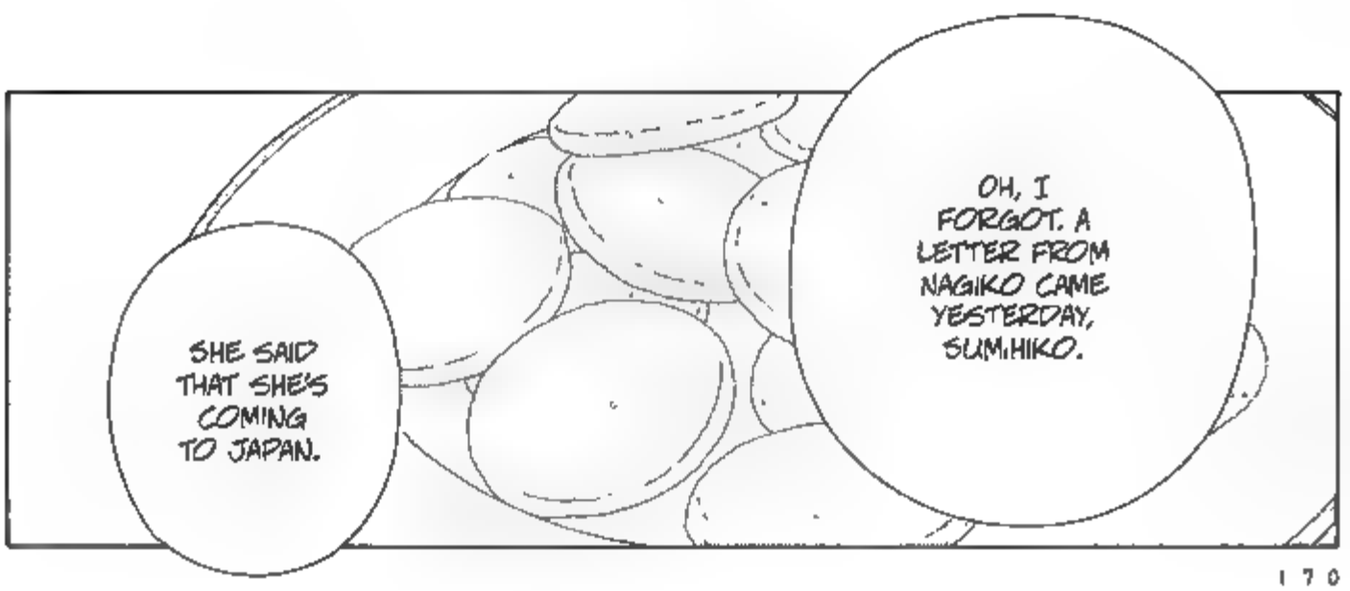

SO THINGS HAVE GOTTEN BUSY FOR ME AGAIN.
MY STUDENTS ARE REALLY AMBITIOUS, SO I CAN'T TAKE IT EASY.
I'M TEACHING AN ADDITIONAL PATCHWORK COURSE,
YEAH. YOU TOO.
clink clink
WHAT IS IT?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT.
hehe
I SEE.
clink
THAT YOU WERE THE ONE WHO WAS STUCK LIVING ALL BY YOURSELF WHEN I LEFT.
WELL, I REALIZED RECENTLY THAT I'VE ALWAYS BEEN SELF-CENTERED,

YOU'RE DOING REALLY WELL. YOU'RE REALLY AMAZING, MOM.
YEAH. BUT
SO YOU CAME TO SEE HOW I WAS DOING?
HUH?
I'M JUST PRE-TENDING.
clink
I CAN'T IMAGINE THAT YOU'LL BE ABLE TO LEAD A NORMAL LIFE.
IF I DIDN'T THROW MYSELF INTO MY WORK, I'D WORRY MYSELF TO DEATH OVER YOU.
WILL YOU MAKE ENOUGH AS A MANGA ARTIST TO PUT FOOD ON THE TABLE, KEITO?
AND ON TOP OF THAT, YOU'RE A HOMOSEXUAL--


WHEN THAT DAY COMES, I'LL STOP COMPLAIN-ING ABOUT YOUR ORIENTATION AND YOUR HOBBIES.
NO,
IF YOU CARE ABOUT ME AT ALL, DON'T BOTHER WITH SURFACE PLEASANTRIES--
JUST WORRY ABOUT BECOMING A FULL-FLEDGED MEMBER OF SOCIETY THAT MUCH SOONER.
SO THAT I WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND FAULT WITH YOU.
YOU SHOW ME THAT YOU CAN DO IT, KEITO,
MOM.


As I was walking home, it suddenly hit me
that Mom was already a mother at my age.


looked unbeliev- ably vast to me.
And the sky


SHE SAID THAT SHE'S COMING TO JAPAN.
OH, I FORGOT. A LETTER FROM NAGIKO CAME YESTERDAY, SUMIHIKO.

SHE'S AN ACCOMPLISHED ARTIST NOW. SHE'S THREE YEARS OLDER THAN YOU, ISN'T SHE?
SHE INVITED ME TO COME HAVE DINNER WITH HER AT HER HOTEL. I'M GOING TO, OF COURSE.
HUH?
OH, THAT'S RIGHT, I WONDER IF SHE'S STILL SINGLE?
THAT WORKED OUT A LITTLE TOO NEATLY.
OH?
click
WHEN SHE LEFT TO STUDY ART IN AMERICA, SHE BROUGHT SUMIHIKO TO ME TO SERVE AS HER REPLACEMENT.
USED TO WORK FOR ME.
OH, KEITO,
NAGIKO
THAT'S WHAT REALLY HAPPENED, RIGHT, SUMIHIKO?
BECAUSE SHE WANTED TO GO TO AMERICA, SHE PUSHED HER WORK AS MY ASSISTANT ONTO HER BOYFRIEND, WHO WAS YOUNGER THAN SHE WAS, AND RAN OFF.

ALL RIGHT. I UNDER-STAND.
BE SURE TO DO YOUR JOB AND TAKE ME TO HER HOTEL, OKAY?
ANYWAY, I WANT TO SEE NAGIKO.
YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO GO THAT FAR.
crunch
WHEN I
ASKED YOU TO BE WITH ME.
I'M TRULY SORRY ABOUT BEFORE.

THE PERSON YOU MENTIONED THEN WAS NAGIKO, WASN'T IT?
BUT
THE WOMAN I'M SEARCHING FOR PROBABLY ONLY EXISTS IN MY OWN GLORIFIED MEMORIES.
THAT WILL BE CLEAR WHEN I SEE HER IN PERSON AGAIN.
AND I'LL BE GLAD OF IT.
WAS THAT GIRL'S NAME NIKI?
DID YOU SEE HER AGAIN AFTER THAT ONE TIME?
HUH?
SHE LEFT FOR GERMANY THE DAY SHE CAME HERE. SHE PROBABLY ISN'T IN THE COUNTRY ANYMORE.
HUH?
REALLY?

I REMEMBERED SOMETHING YESTERDAY, OUT OF THE BLUE.
NO, THAT'S NOT IT.
WERE YOU SERIOUS ABOUT HER, SUMIHIKO-SAN?
BUT THE NIGHT YOU SAW US TOGETHER AT THE CLUB—
SHE AND I RARELY SPOKE TO EACH OTHER ABOUT OURSELVES,
I JUST SORT OF HOOKED UP WITH HER ON AN IMPULSE, BUT IT TURNED OUT SHE WAS SERIOUS ABOUT ME
I TURNED HER DOWN, SAYING THAT I COULDN'T GO STEADY WITH HER, BUT SHE SAID THAT SHE WOULDN'T MIND JUST FOOLING AROUND WITH ME
THERE'S THIS REALLY CUTE GIRL
SHE'S SO CUTE,

HUNH
SO I SLEEP WITH HER SOMETIMES.
IT'S REALLY ROUGH

I'M DOING SOMETHING TERRIBLE HERE.
SHE REALLY IS THE CUTEST THING, AND SHE'S A GOOD GIRL.
I REALLY SHOULDN'T BE SEEING HER, ESPECIALLY SINCE WE'RE JUST FOOLING AROUND

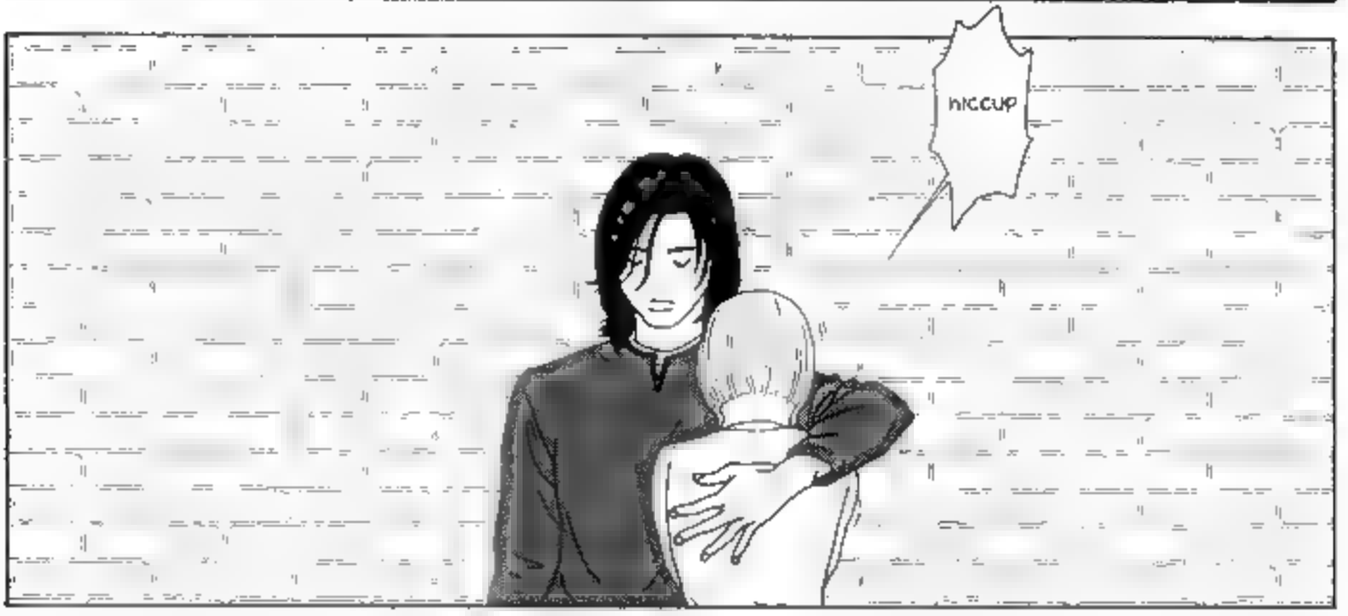
BECAUSE YOU HAVE FEELINGS FOR HER
YOU'RE SEEING HER BECAUSE YOU WANT TO SEE HER

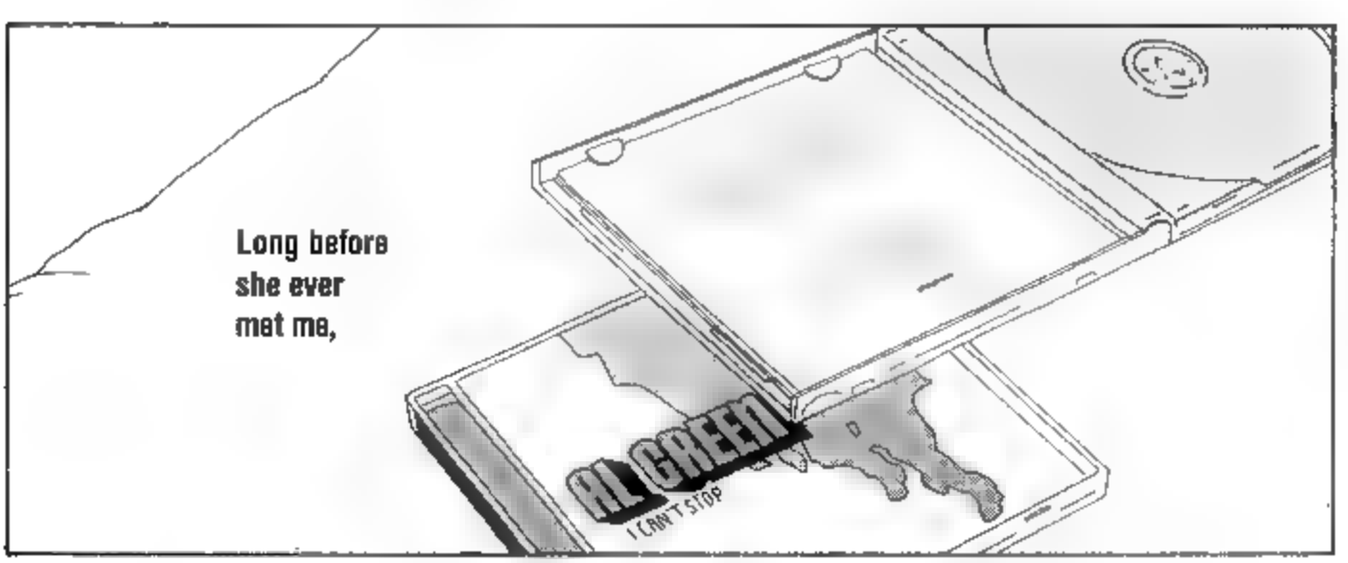
THAT'S STRANGE.
WHAT IS?

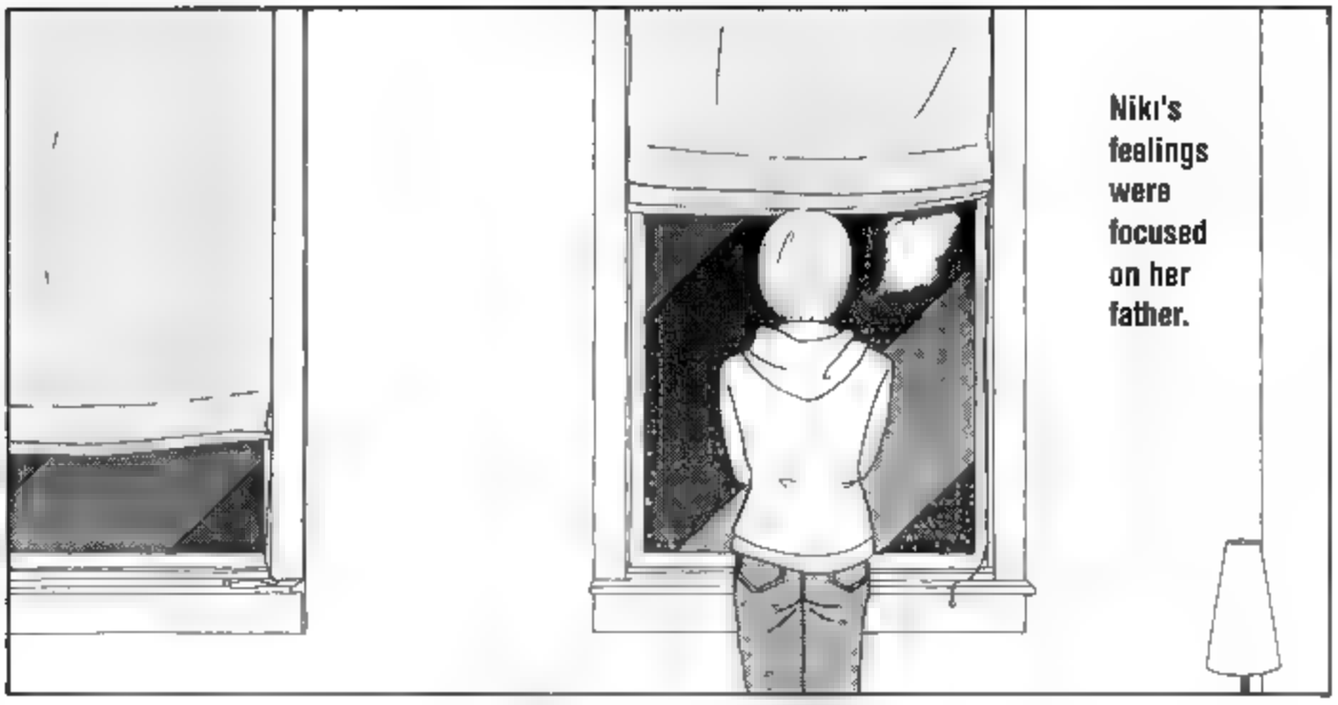
"HIM"?
THE PERSON WHO'S MOST DEAR TO ME.
NO, YOU'RE WRONG.
I'M NOT GOING TO FALL FOR ANYONE UNTIL I'VE MET UP WITH "HIM"
BUT
FOR THAT GIRL
YOU REALLY DO HAVE IT BAD
THINKING BACK ON IT,

OH, THAT'S RIGHT.
WAS SHE TALKING ABOUT YOU?
I DIDN'T KNOW IT AT THE TIME,
BUT I HURT YOU REALLY BADLY BEFORE. I'M TRULY SORRY ABOUT THAT.
BUT
SHE REALLY DID LOVE YOU.
IF SHE DIDN'T,

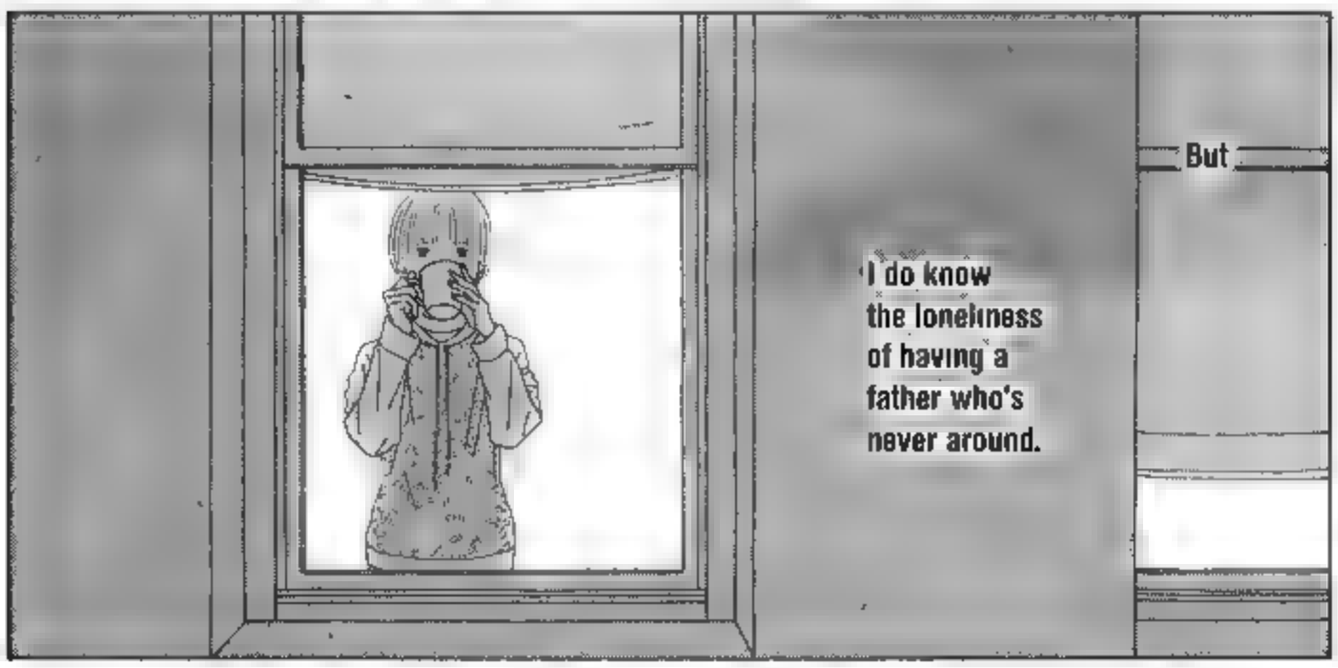
SHE WOULDN'T HAVE SAID IT WAS ROUGH FOR HER.

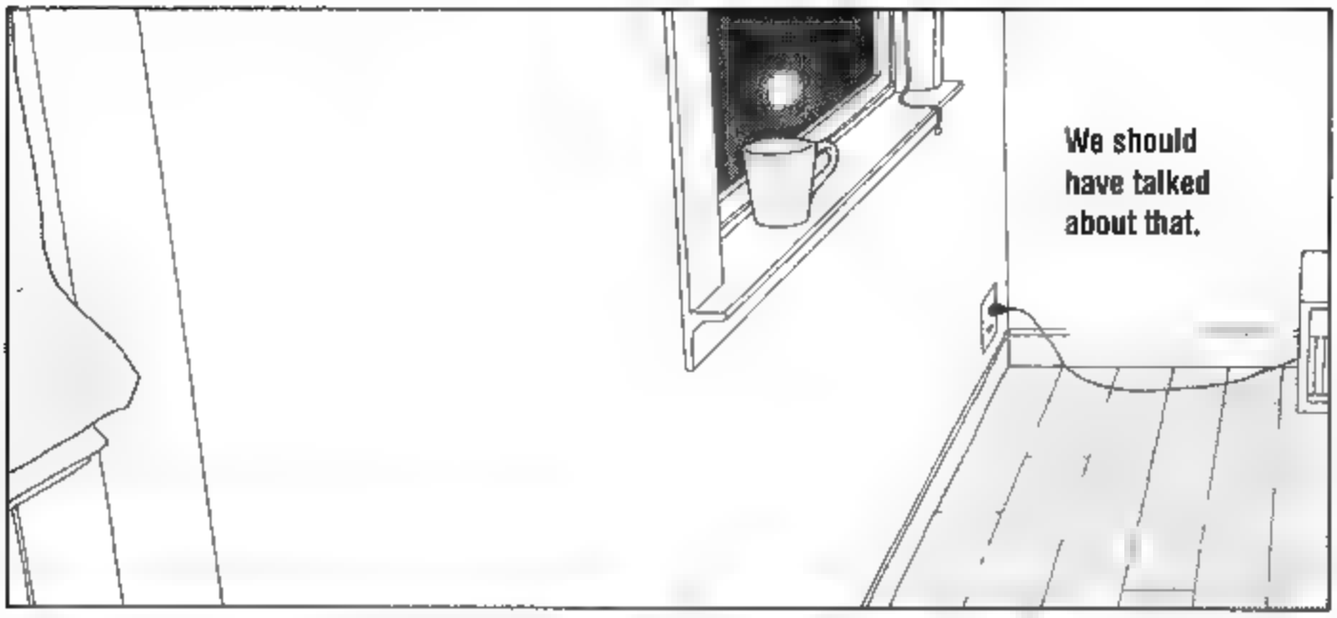

HICCUP

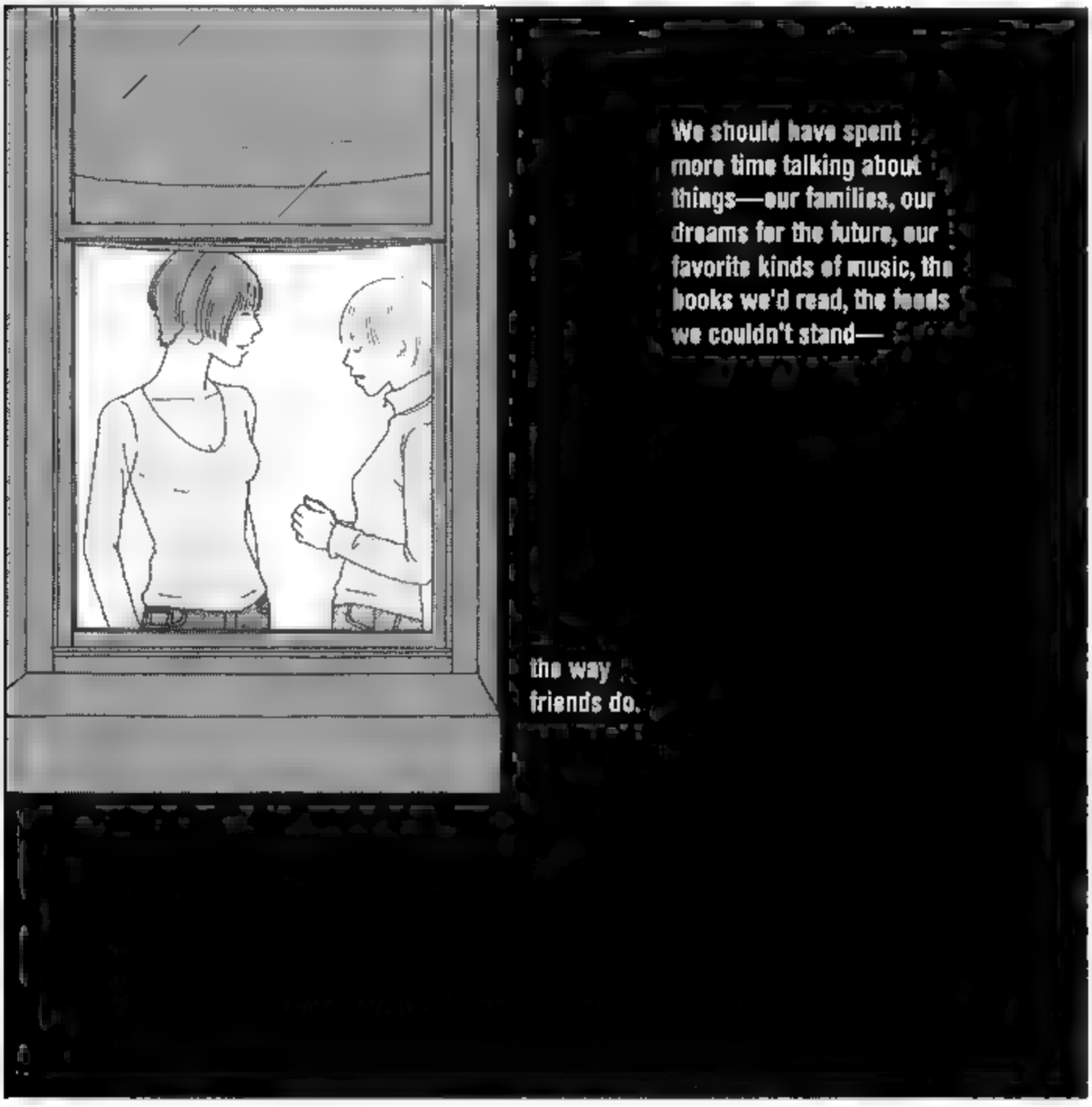

Long before she ever met me,
AL GREEN
I CAN'T STOP

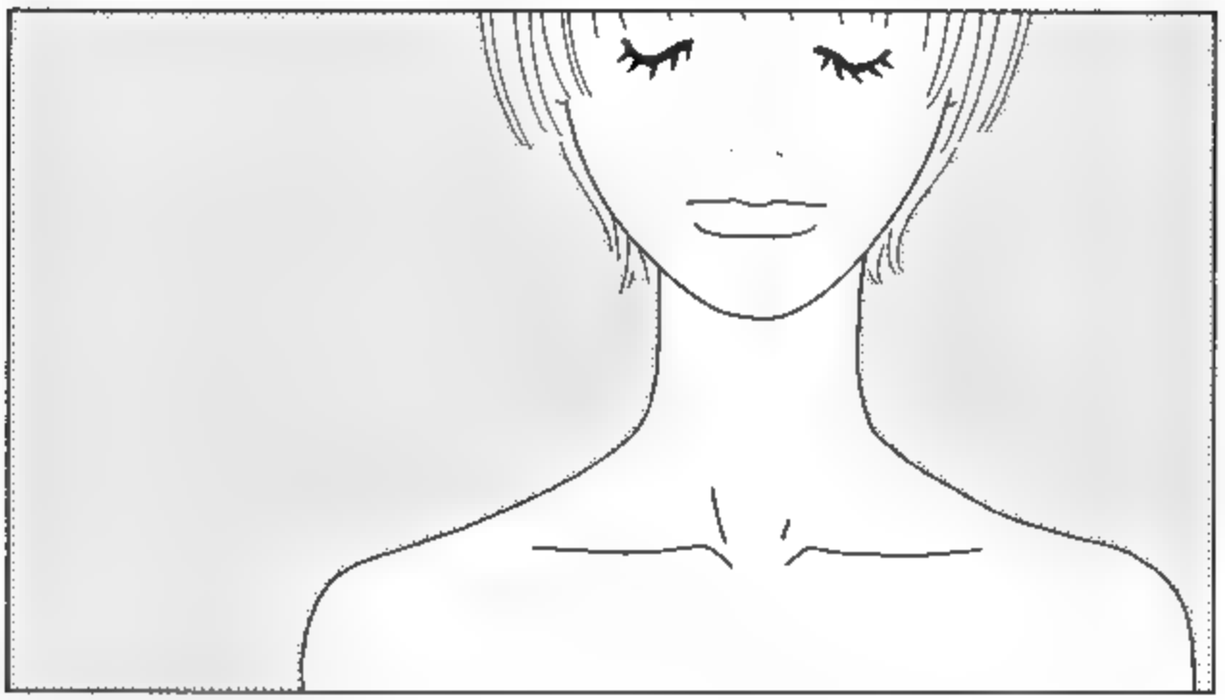

Niki's feelings were focused on her father.

I can't even imagine
how very strong her feelings for her father must have been.


But
I do know the loneliness of having a father who's never around.


We should have talked about that.


We should have spent more time talking about things—our families, our dreams for the future, our favorite kinds of music, the books we'd read, the foods we couldn't stand—
the way friends do.

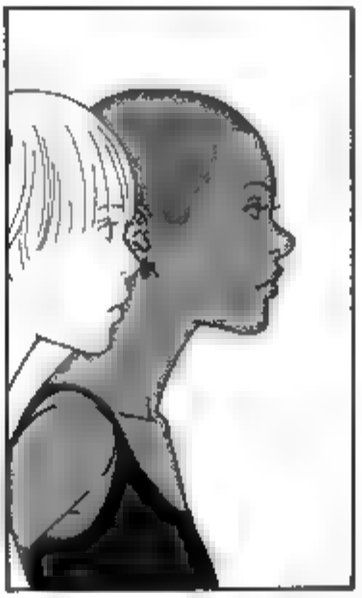


Final. Loneliness

Your manga will be finished soon.

Angie.

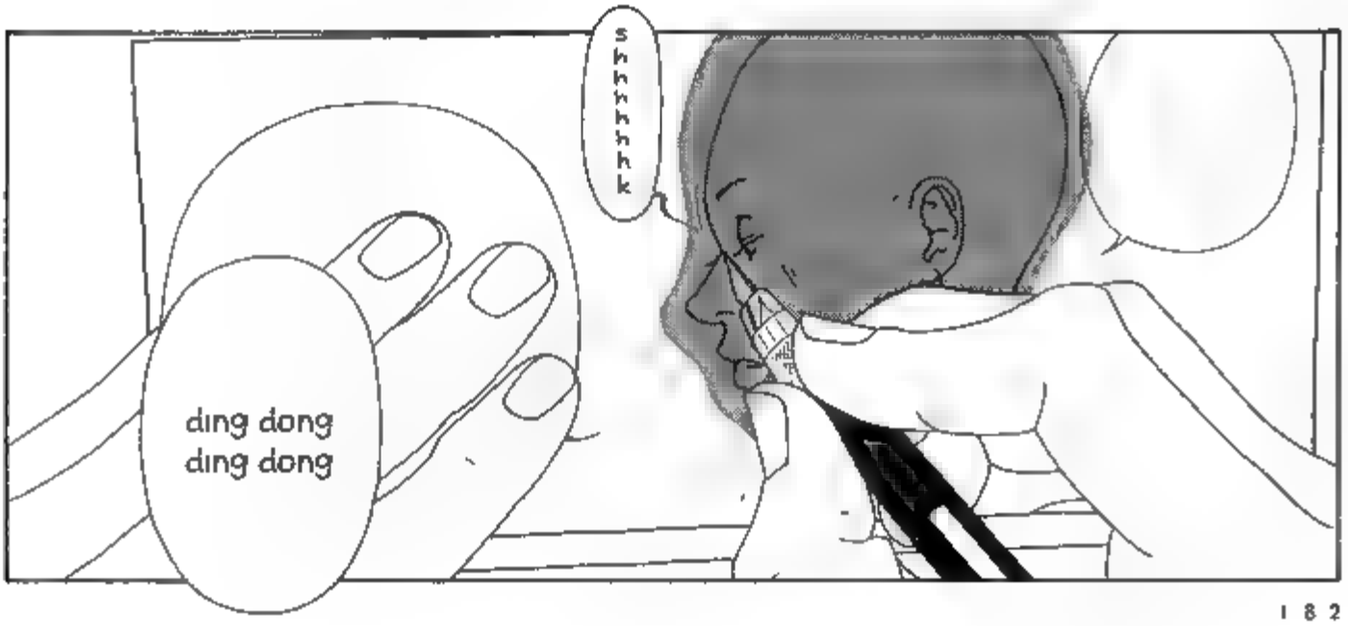
it's like a record of my soul.



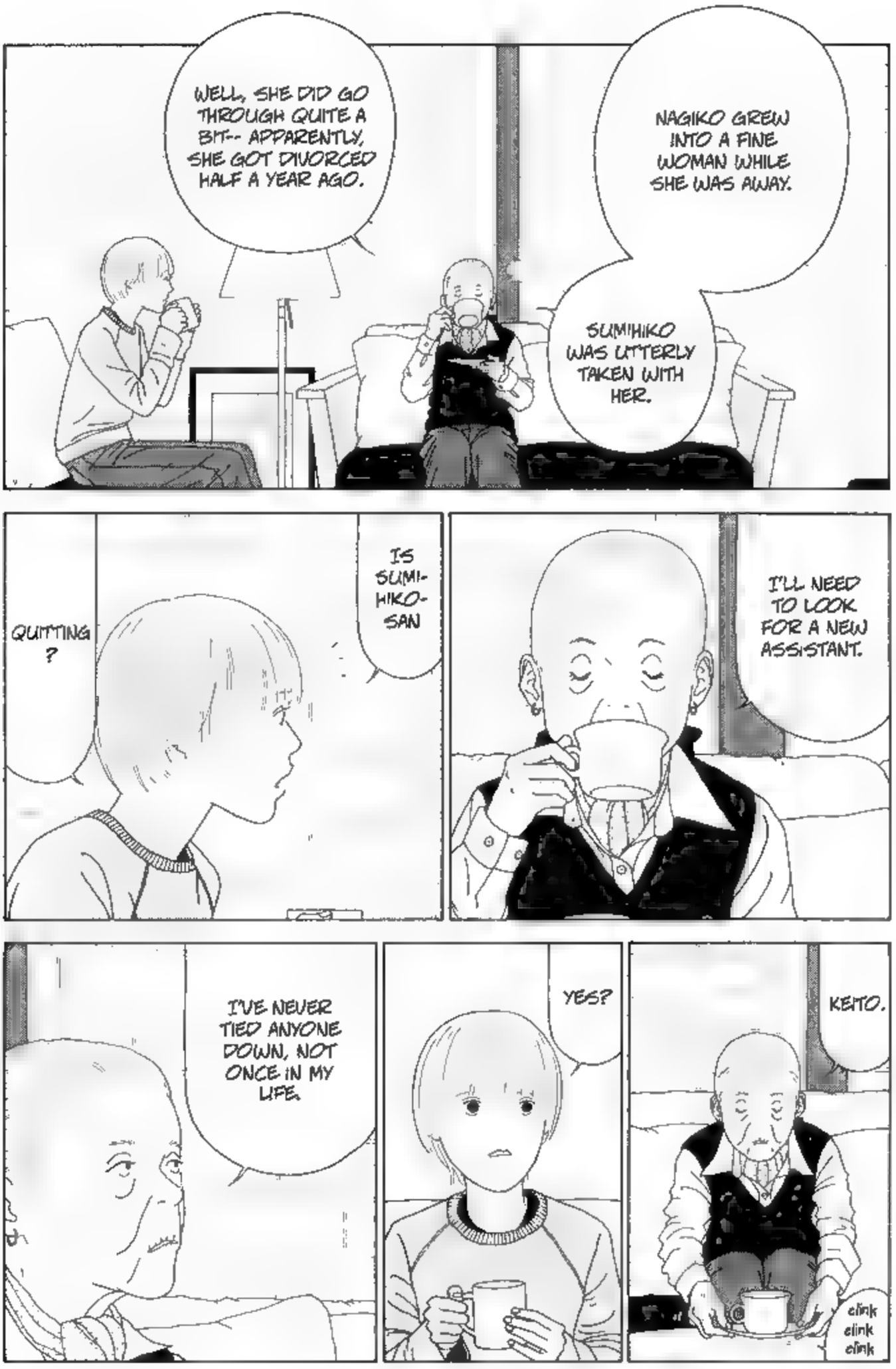
While I've been drawing it, a lot of things have happened and I've gone through a variety of emotions—

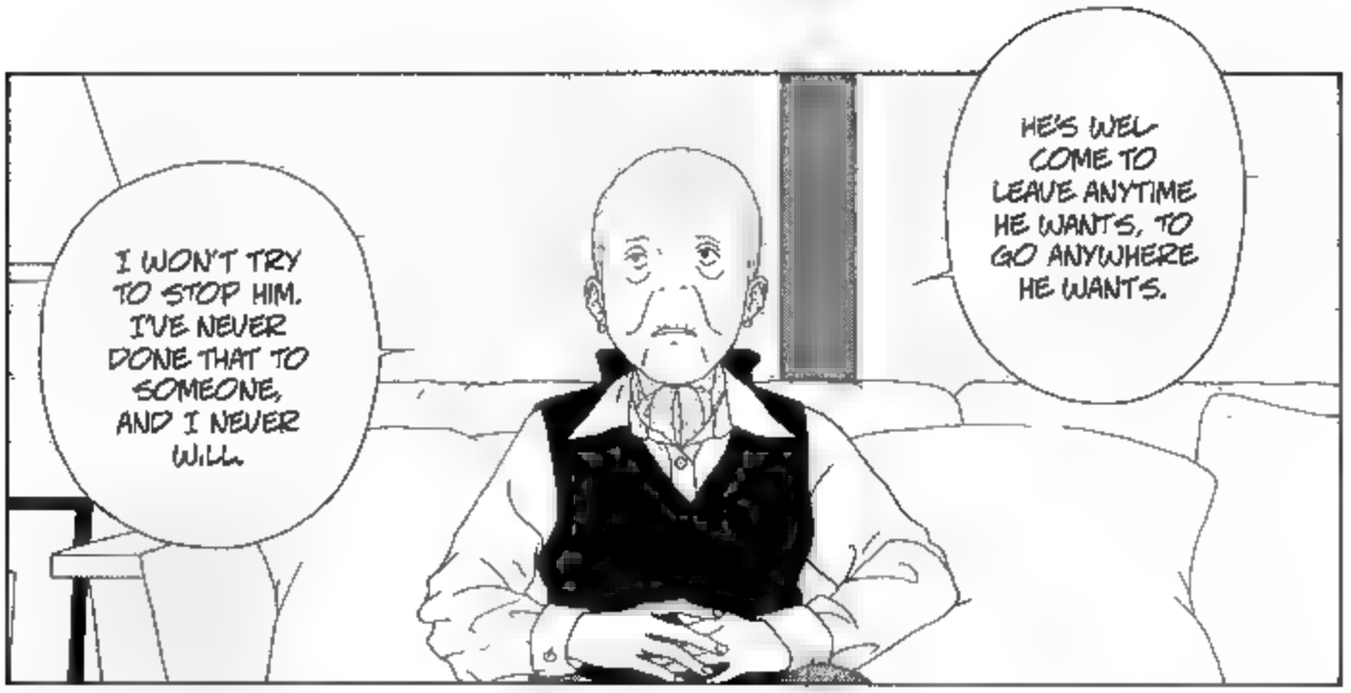
I'm sure the worst is yet to come.

When it's done, I'll submit it to a publisher.

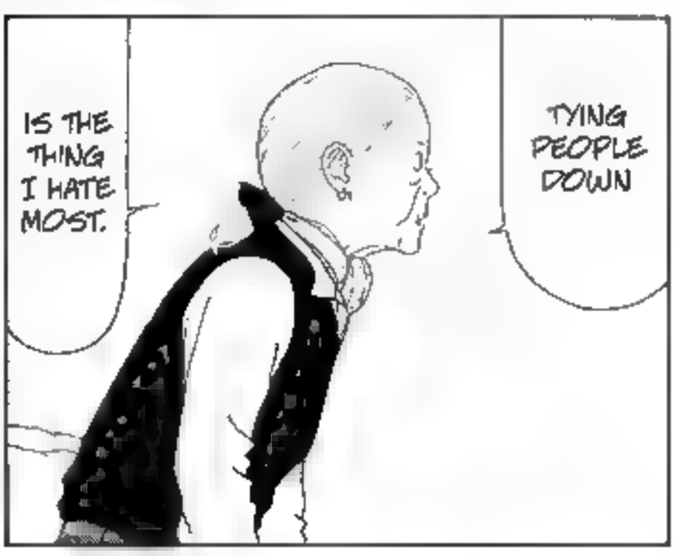


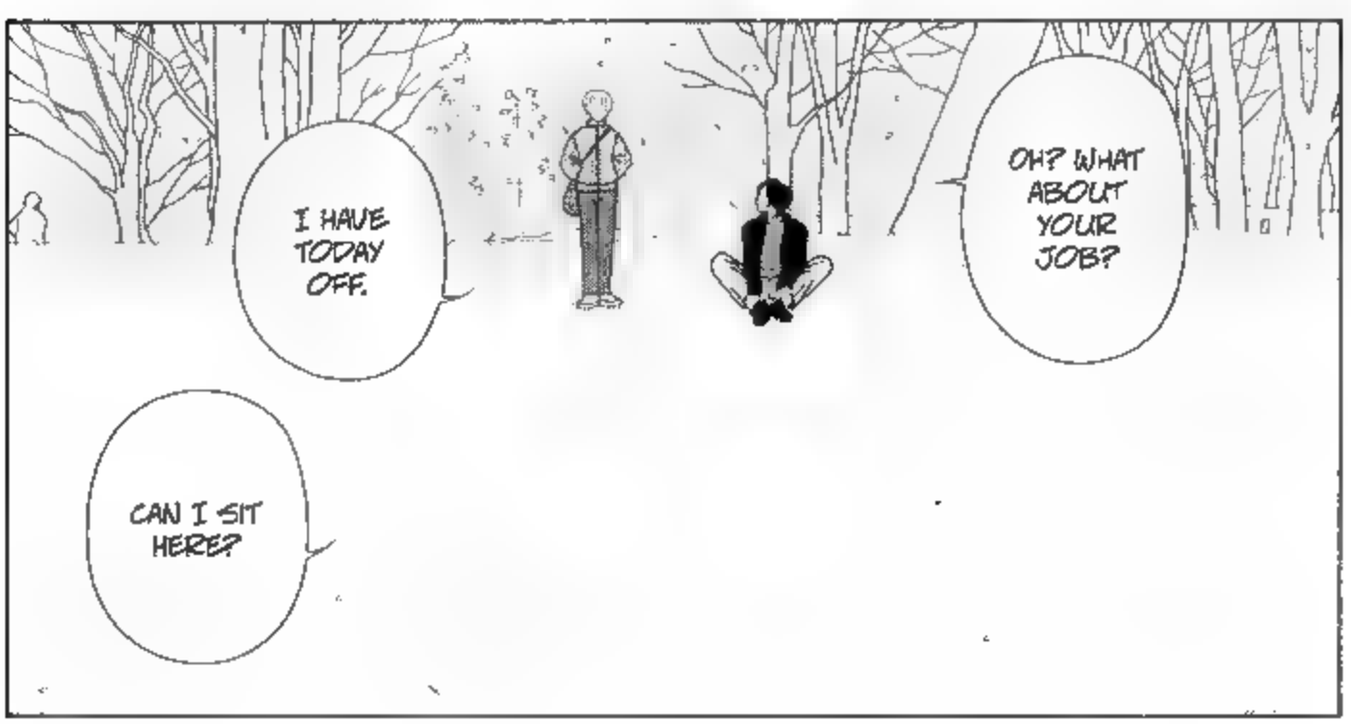
WHAT HAPPENED TO SUMIHIKO-SAN?
I CAN'T BELIEVE HE SENT YOU HOME IN A TAXI BY YOURSELF, RUI-SAN.
WELL,
I GAVE HIM SOME TIME ALONE WITH NAGIKO.
RIGHT NOW, THE TWO OF THEM ARE PROBABLY IN HER HOTEL ROOM, REAF-FIRMING THEIR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER.
PLEASE MAKE SOME HERBAL TEA FOR US, KEITO.

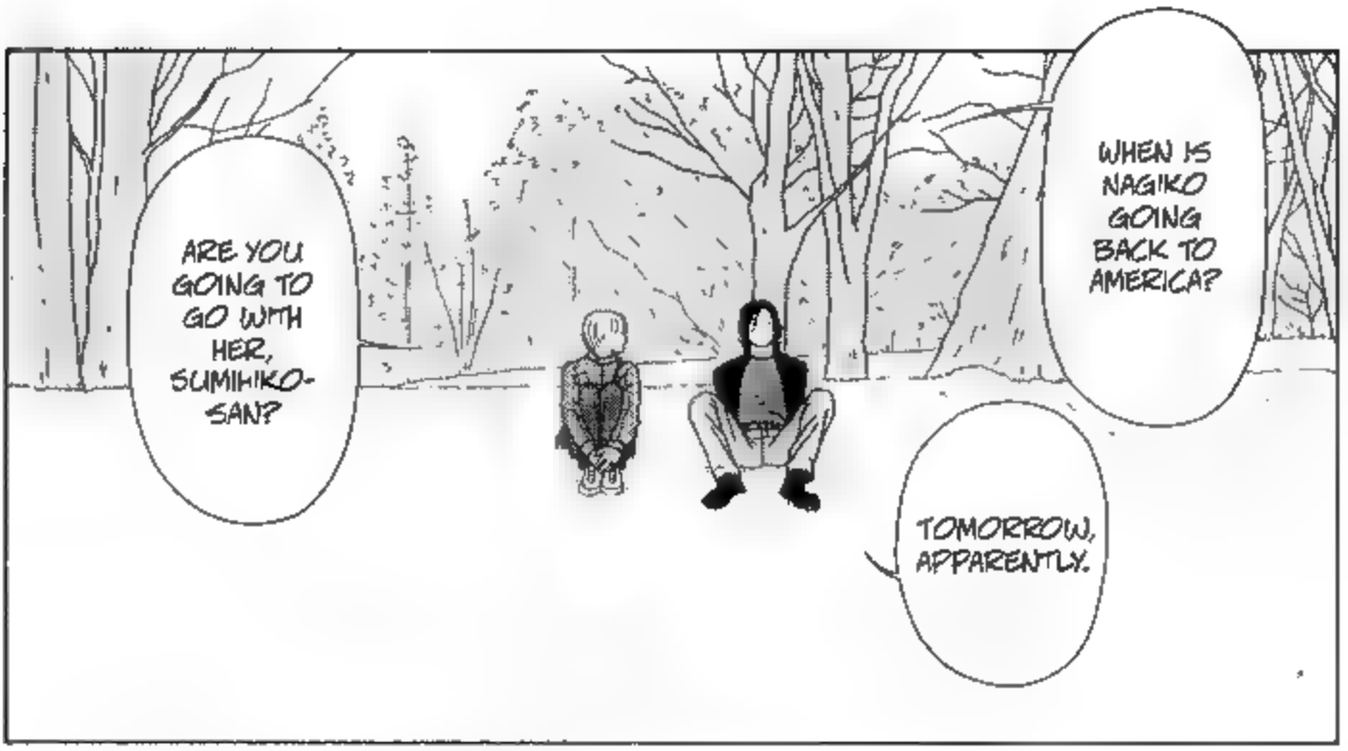

WELL, SHE DID GO THROUGH QUITE A BIT-- APPARENTLY, SHE GOT DIVORCED HALF A YEAR AGO.
NAGIKO GREW INTO A FINE WOMAN WHILE SHE WAS AWAY.
SUMIHIKO WAS UTTERLY TAKEN WITH HER.
IS SUMI-HIKO-SAN
QUITTING ?
I'LL NEED TO LOOK FOR A NEW ASSISTANT.
I'VE NEVER TIED ANYONE DOWN, NOT ONCE IN MY LIFE.
YES?
KEITO.
clink
clink
clink


I WON'T TRY TO STOP HIM. I'VE NEVER DONE THAT TO SOMEONE, AND I NEVER WILL.
HE'S WELCOME TO LEAVE ANYTIME HE WANTS, TO GO ANYWHERE HE WANTS.

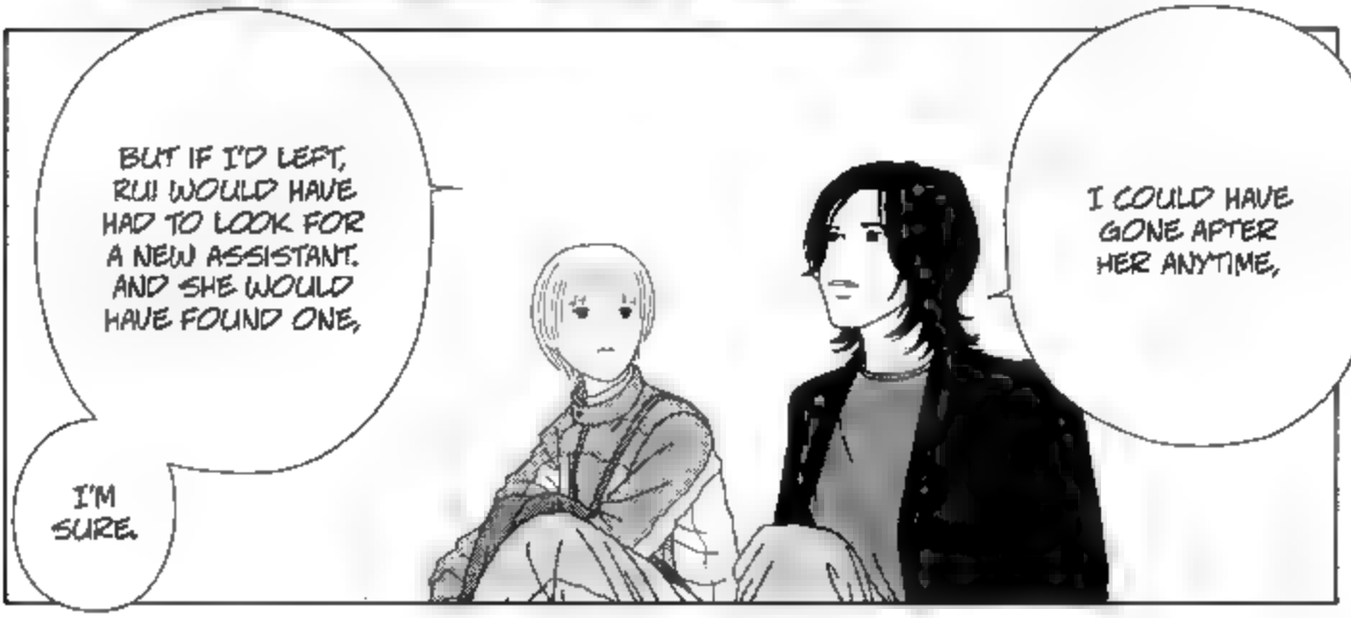
GOOD NIGHT, KEITO.


IS THE THING I HATE MOST.
TYING PEOPLE DOWN

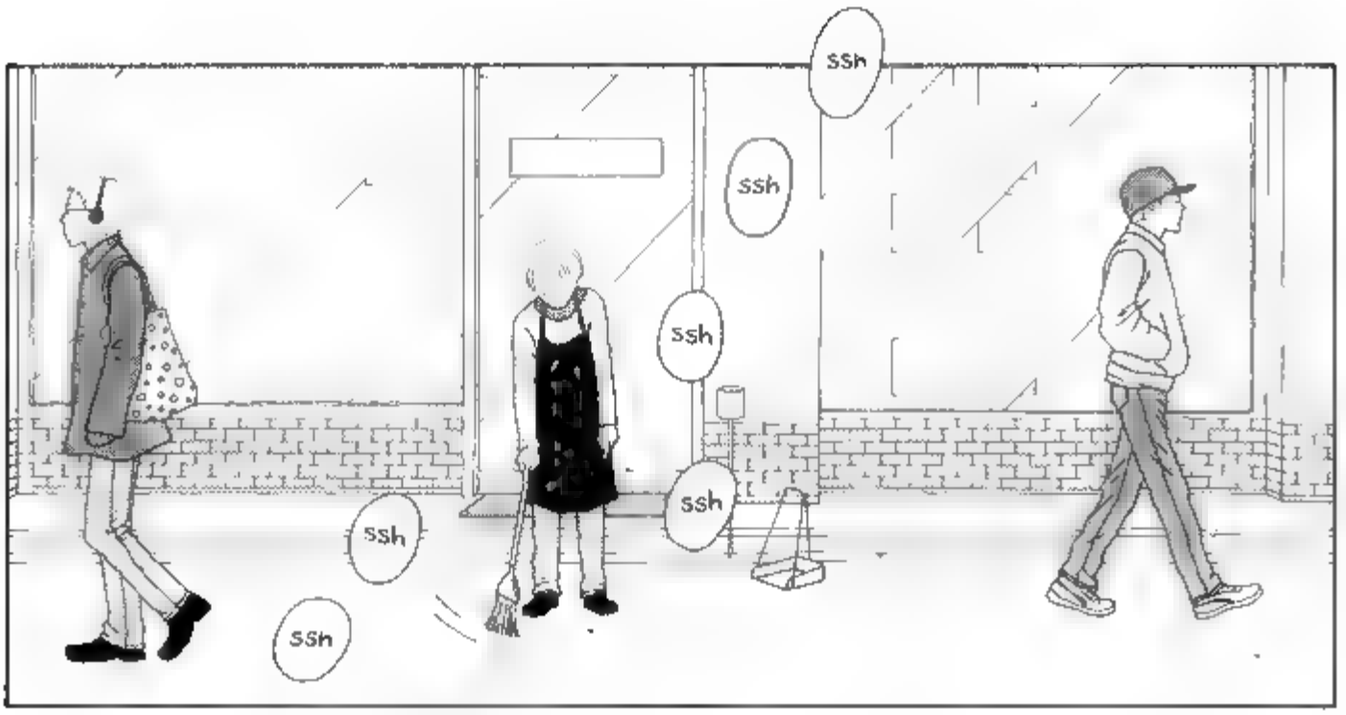

I HAVE TODAY OFF.
OH? WHAT ABOUT YOUR JOB?
CAN I SIT HERE?


WHEN IS NAGIKO GOING BACK TO AMERICA?
ARE YOU GOING TO GO WITH HER, SUMIHIKO-SAN?
TOMORROW, APPARENTLY.

EVEN IF I WENT WITH HER, I'D HAVE NOTHING TO DO THERE.


BUT IF I'D LEFT, RUI WOULD HAVE HAD TO LOOK FOR A NEW ASSISTANT. AND SHE WOULD HAVE FOUND ONE,
I'M SURE.
I COULD HAVE GONE AFTER HER ANYTIME,

IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH, MUCH WORSE THAN LOSING NAGIKO.
I DIDN'T WANT THAT.
NAGIKO WAS SO PRETTY YESTERDAY
THAT SHE GAVE ME CHILLS.
SHE AND I SHARED A NICE DREAM.


SSh
SSh
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SSh
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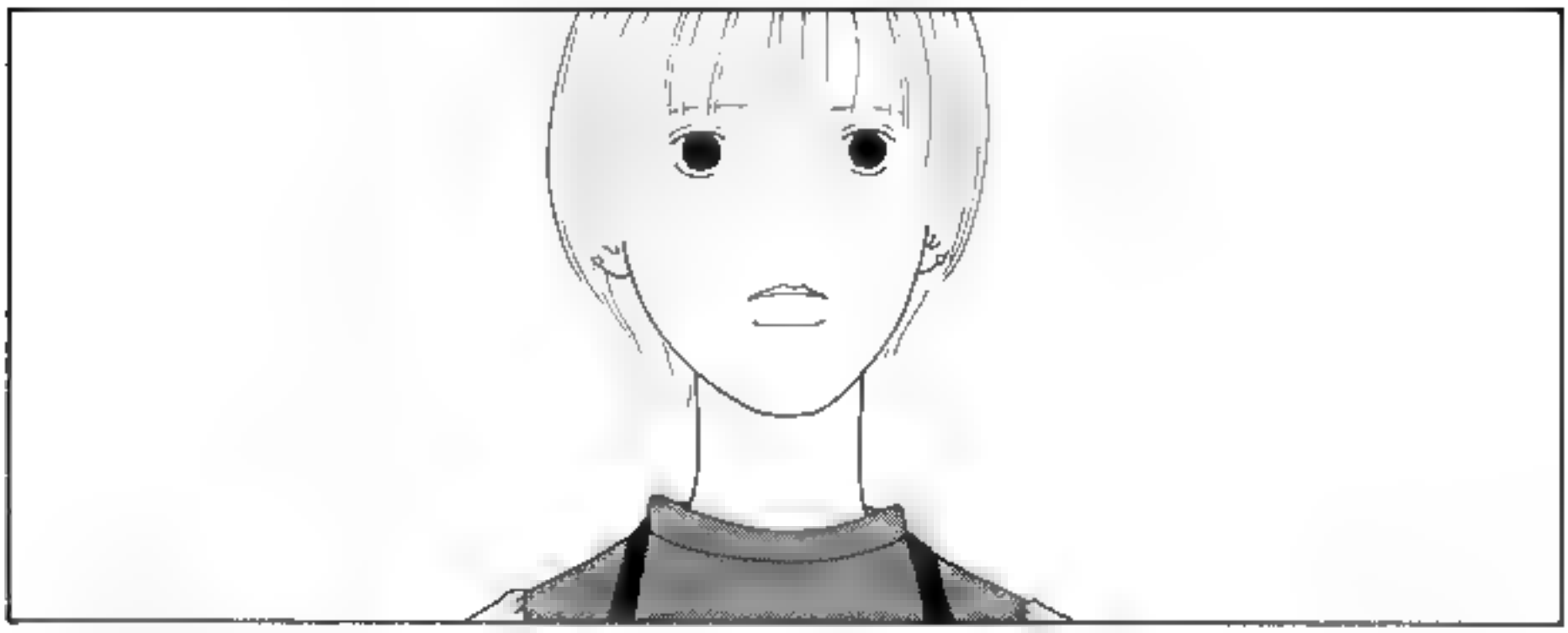
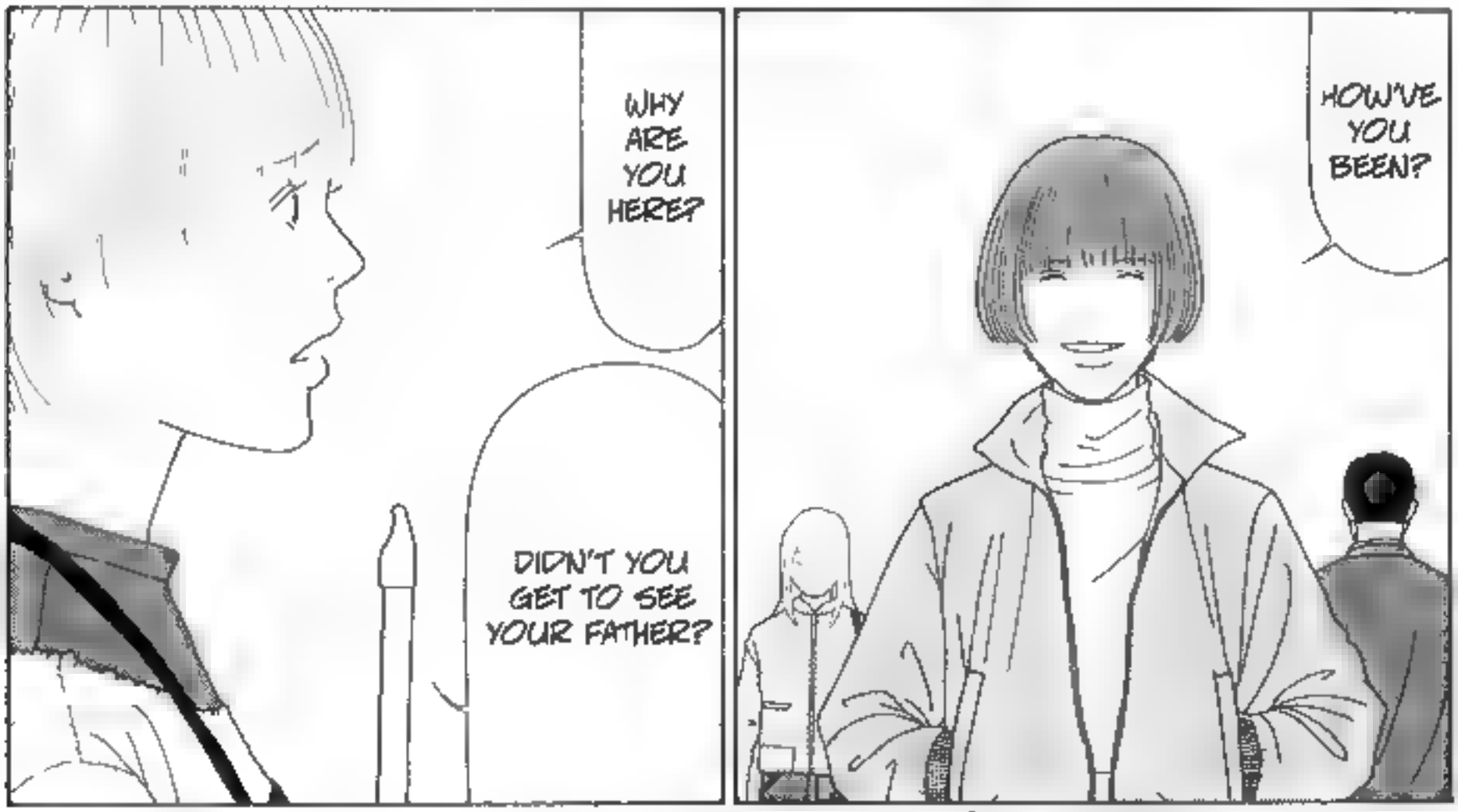




* a place with live music

I WAS SO HAPPY, I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO PASS OUT.
AND
WE PLAYED TOGETHER AT A LIVE HOUSE. *
THE SOUNDS OF OUR TRUMPETS WOVE TOGETHER SO MANY TIMES.

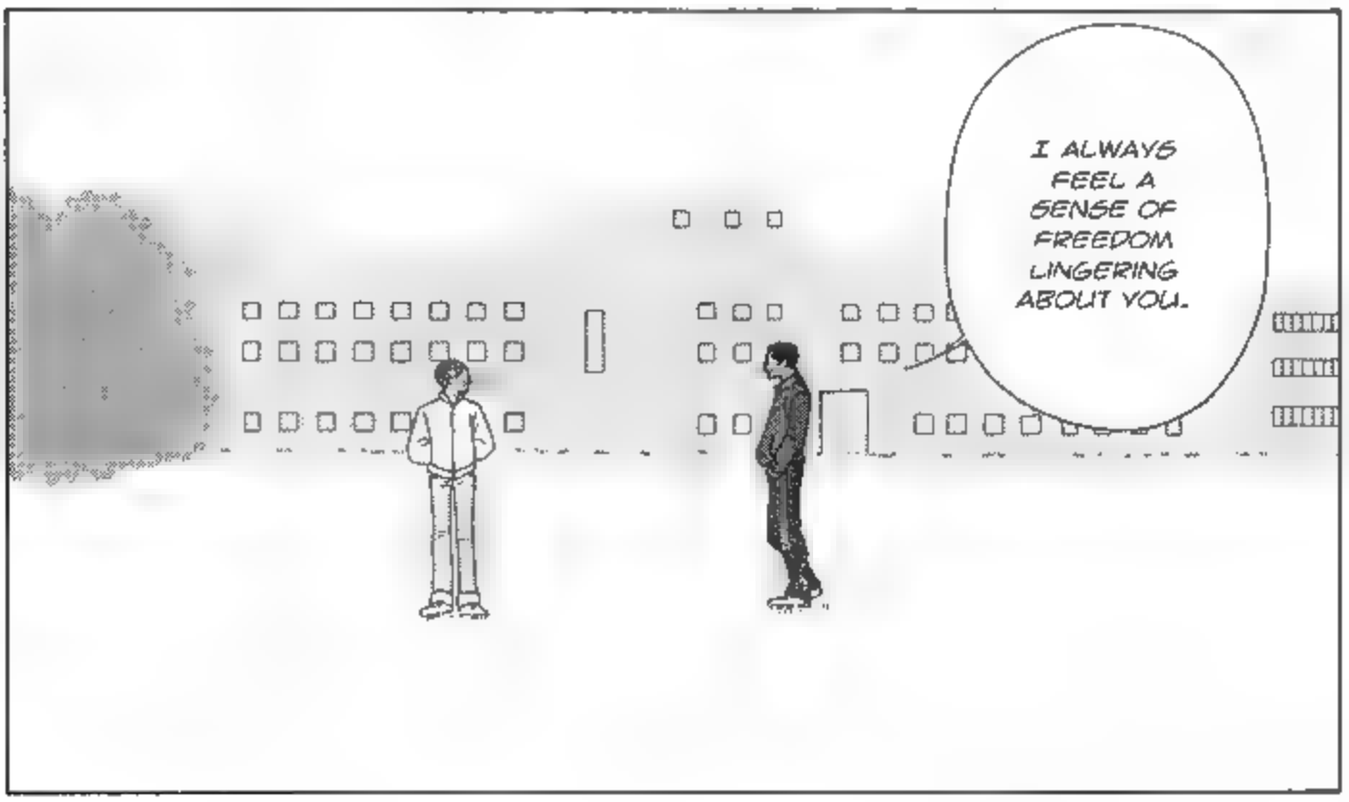
WE SPENT THE NIGHT TOGETHER SEVERAL TIMES.
I'M COMPLETELY FREE FROM HIM NOW--
I'M NOT GOING TO CHASE AFTER HIM ANYMORE.
IN OTHER WORDS, I'M DONE WITH THAT NOW.
AS I WAS LEAVING, YOU TOLD ME: "A FATHER ISN'T LIKE A BOYFRIEND." REMEMBER THAT?
I WANTED TO TELL YOU ABOUT ALL THIS.

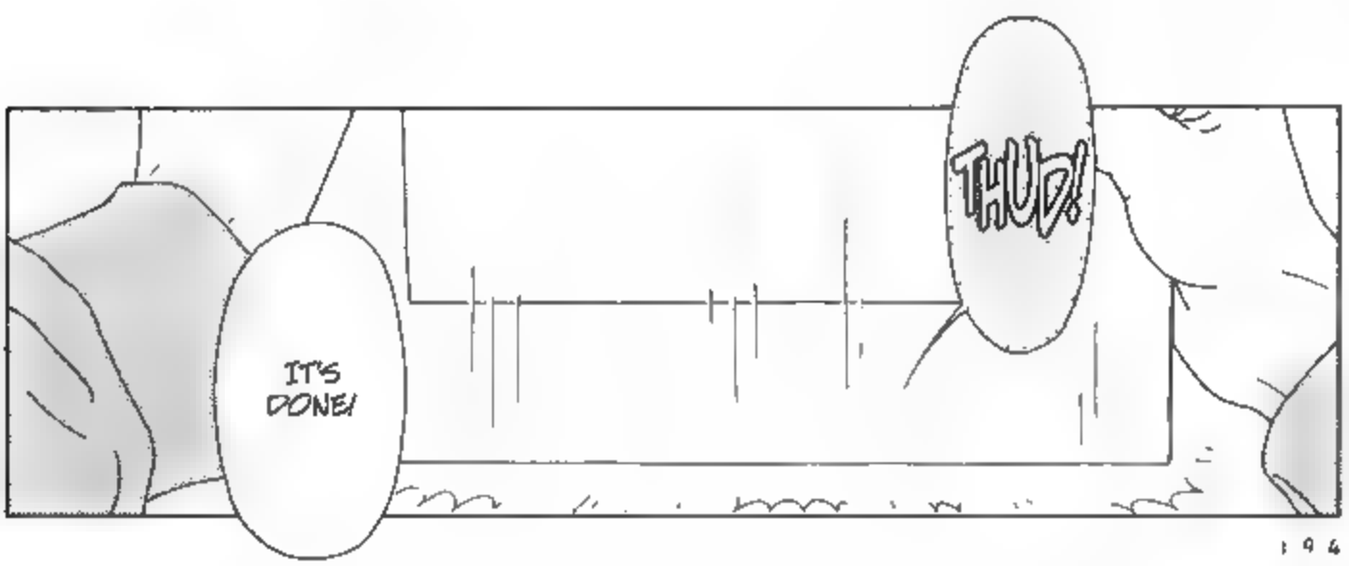
NIKI.
I CAME TO TELL YOU THAT YOU WERE RIGHT.
RECORD SHOP
HUH?
AM I TOO LATE?
DO YOU STILL
HAVE FEELINGS FOR ME, KEITO?

IF YOU DO, I'LL BE YOUR GIRL-FRIEND.
I LOVE YOU, KEITO.

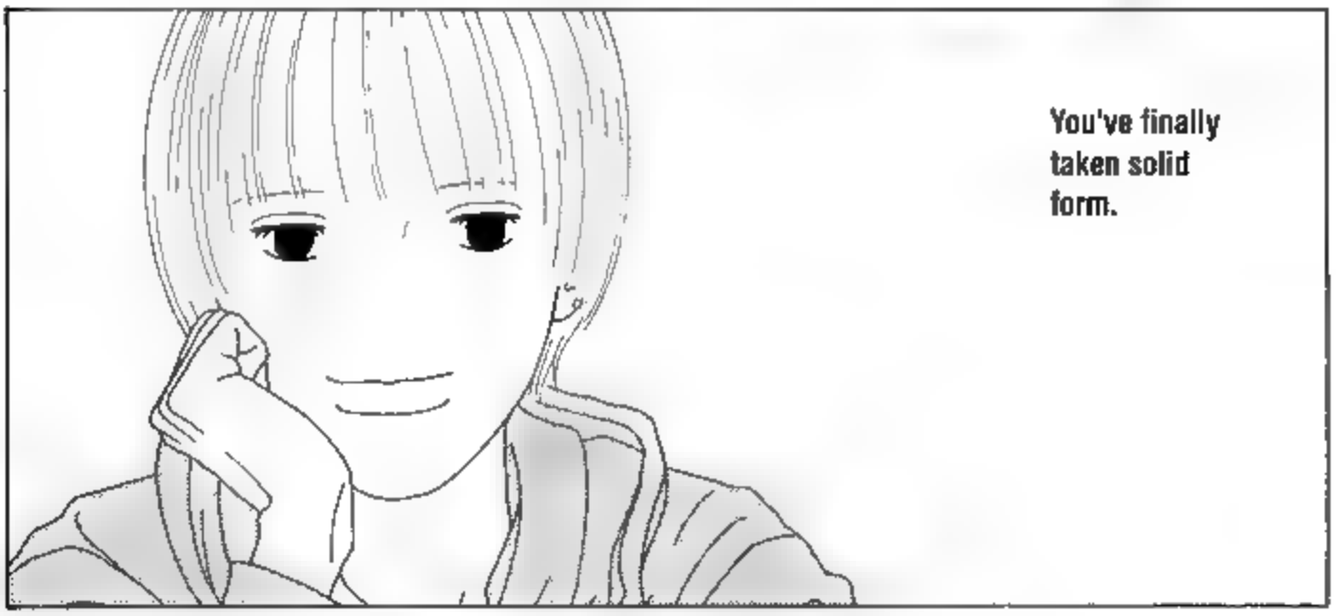
HEY, ANGIE. ARE YOU SAYING THAT YOU'RE NOT GONNA FALL IN LOVE EVER AGAIN?
WHAT? NO WAY!
BUT YOU KNOW, EDDIE,
I WRITE SONGS WHEN I'M LONELY.
IT'S WHEN I'M LONELY
THAT MY HEART ISN'T BOUND BY ANYTHING.

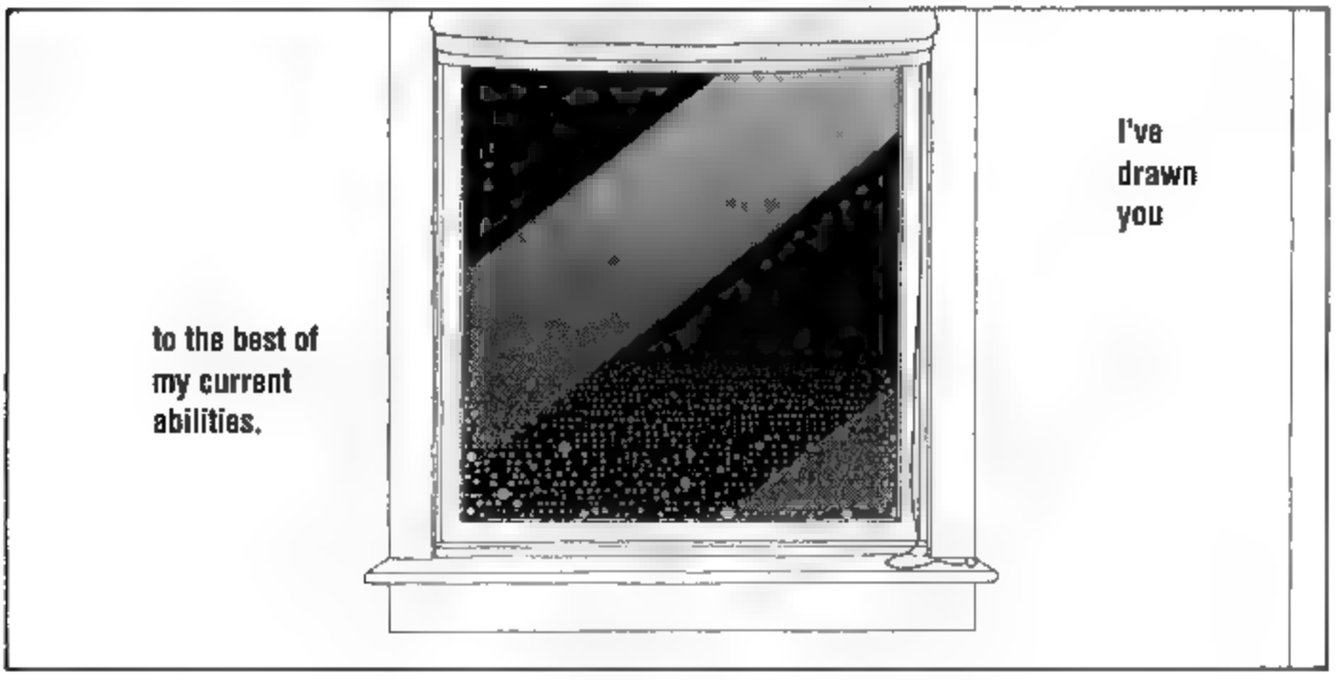
HUH?
SO THAT'S WHAT IT IS.


I ALWAYS FEEL A SENSE OF FREEDOM LINGERING ABOUT YOU.


THUD!
IT'S DONE!

AHH~! IT'S DONE~!
Angie.

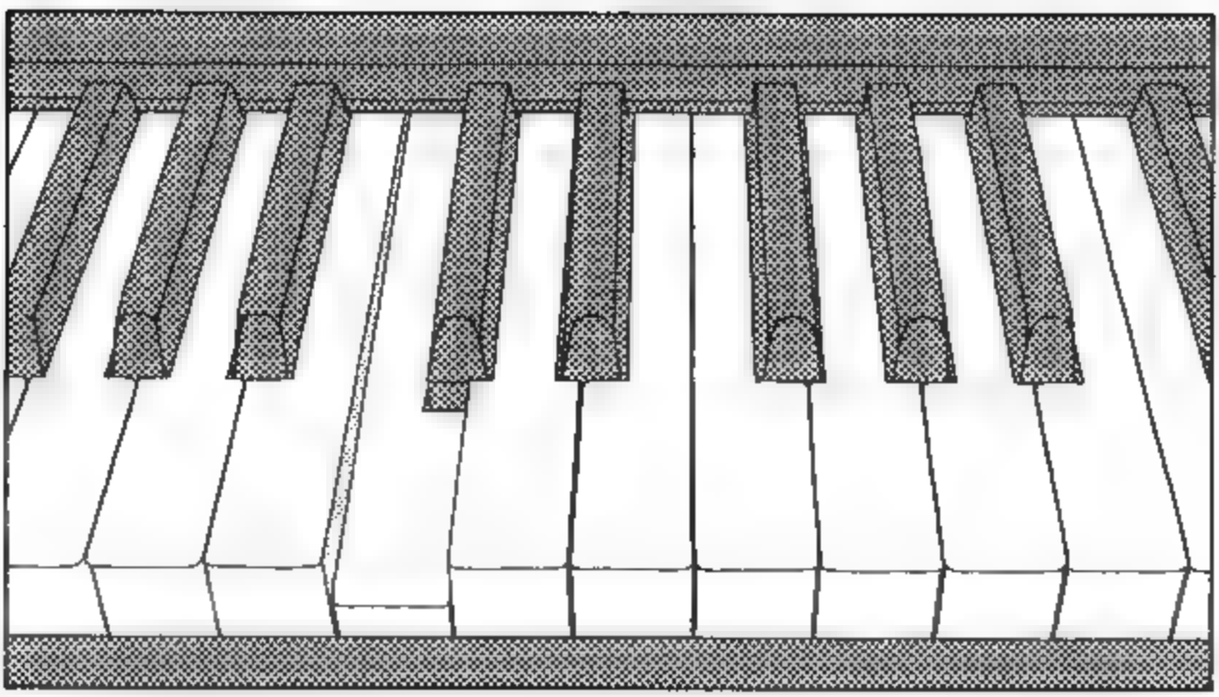

You've finally taken solid form.


I've drawn you
to the best of my current abilities.

I'll have
Niki read it
tomorrow.

You're a lonely
diva, but this isn't
a sad manga.
Isn't that right,
Angie?

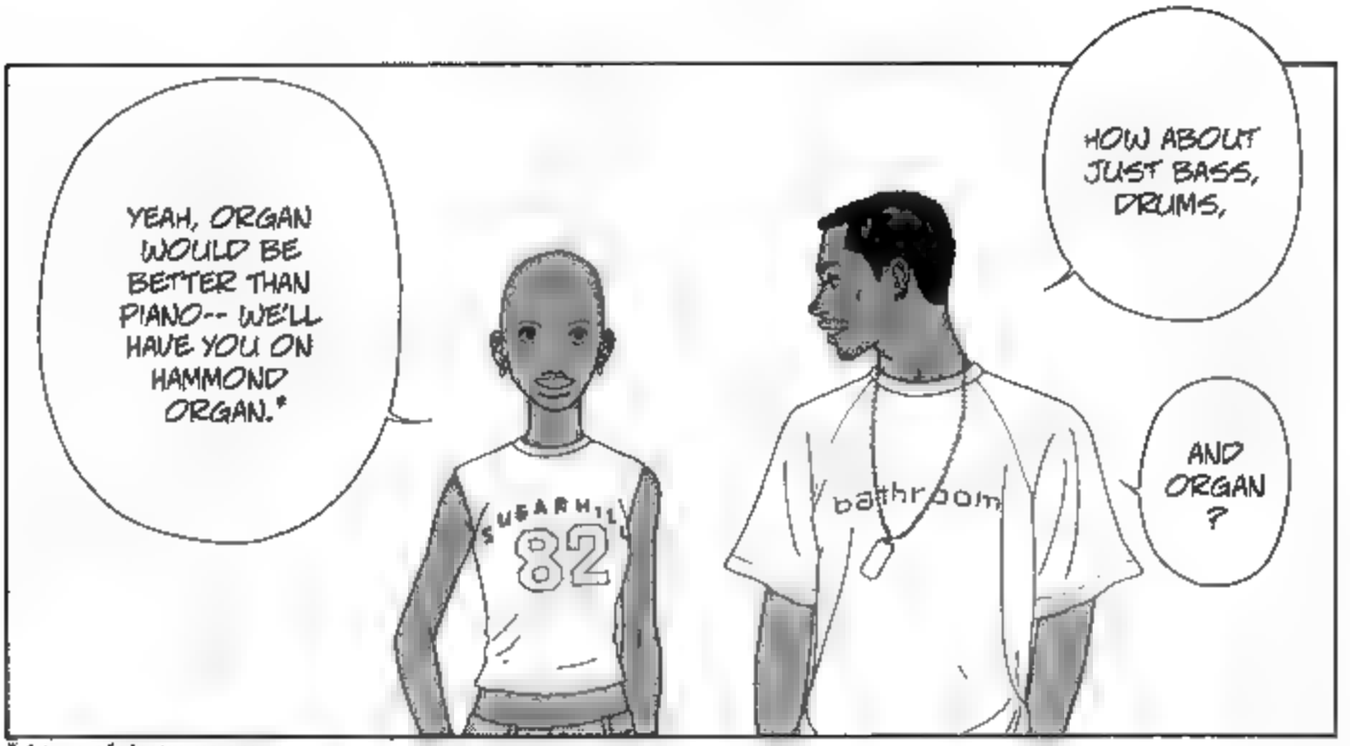
THE END



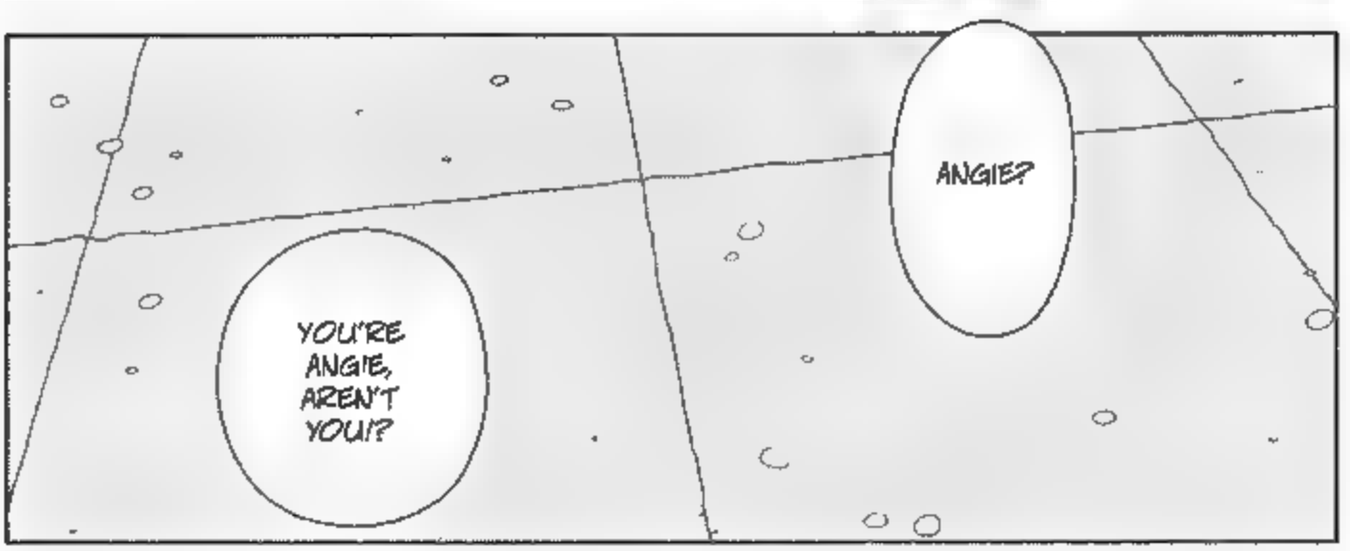
Your Love Song

that other
I love you so much more than that other person does

I WAS JUST THINKING THE EXACT SAME THING!

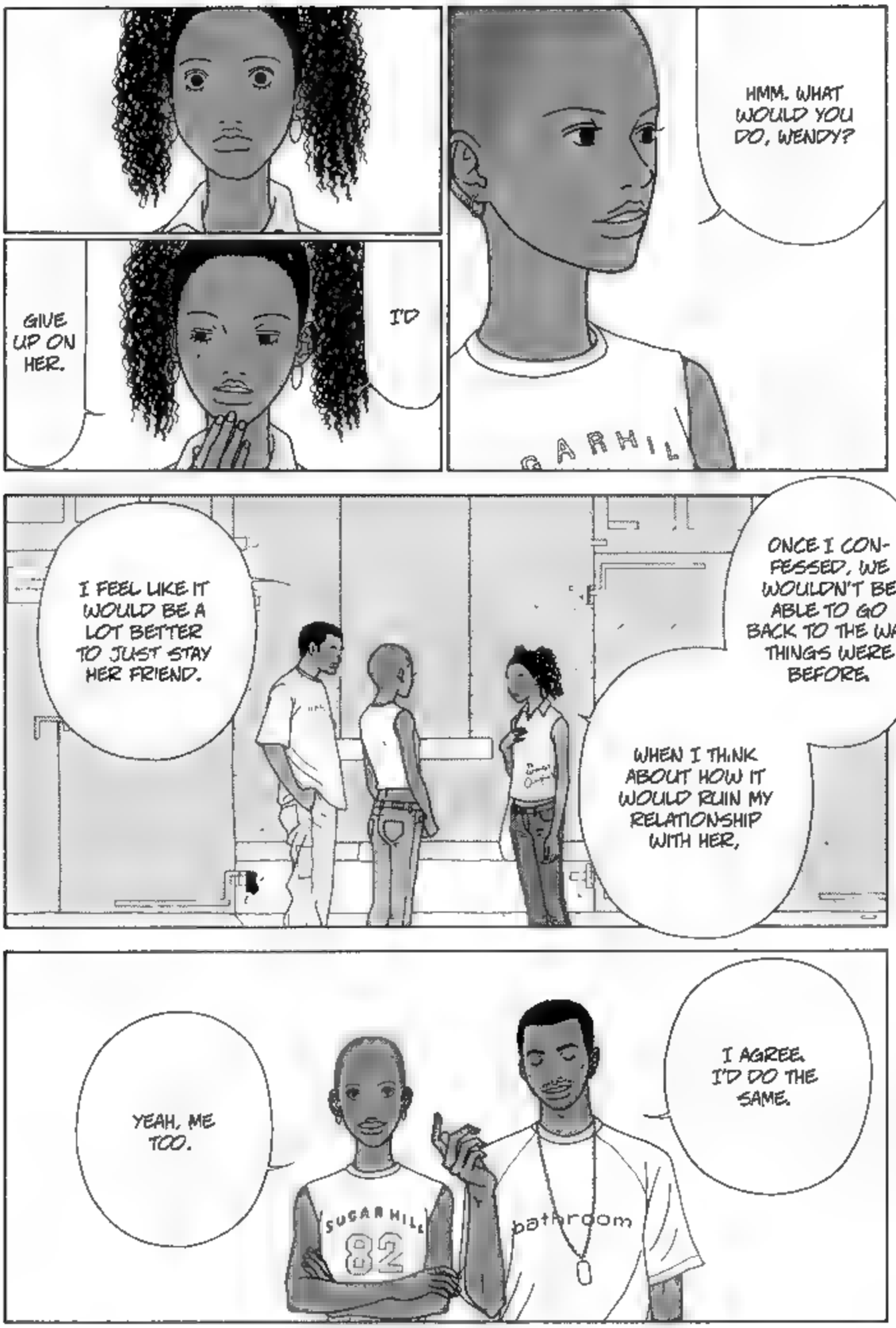

HOW ABOUT JUST BASS, DRUMS,
AND ORGAN ?
YEAH, ORGAN WOULD BE BETTER THAN PIANO-- WE'LL HAVE YOU ON HAMMOND ORGAN.*
SUGARHILL 82
bathroom

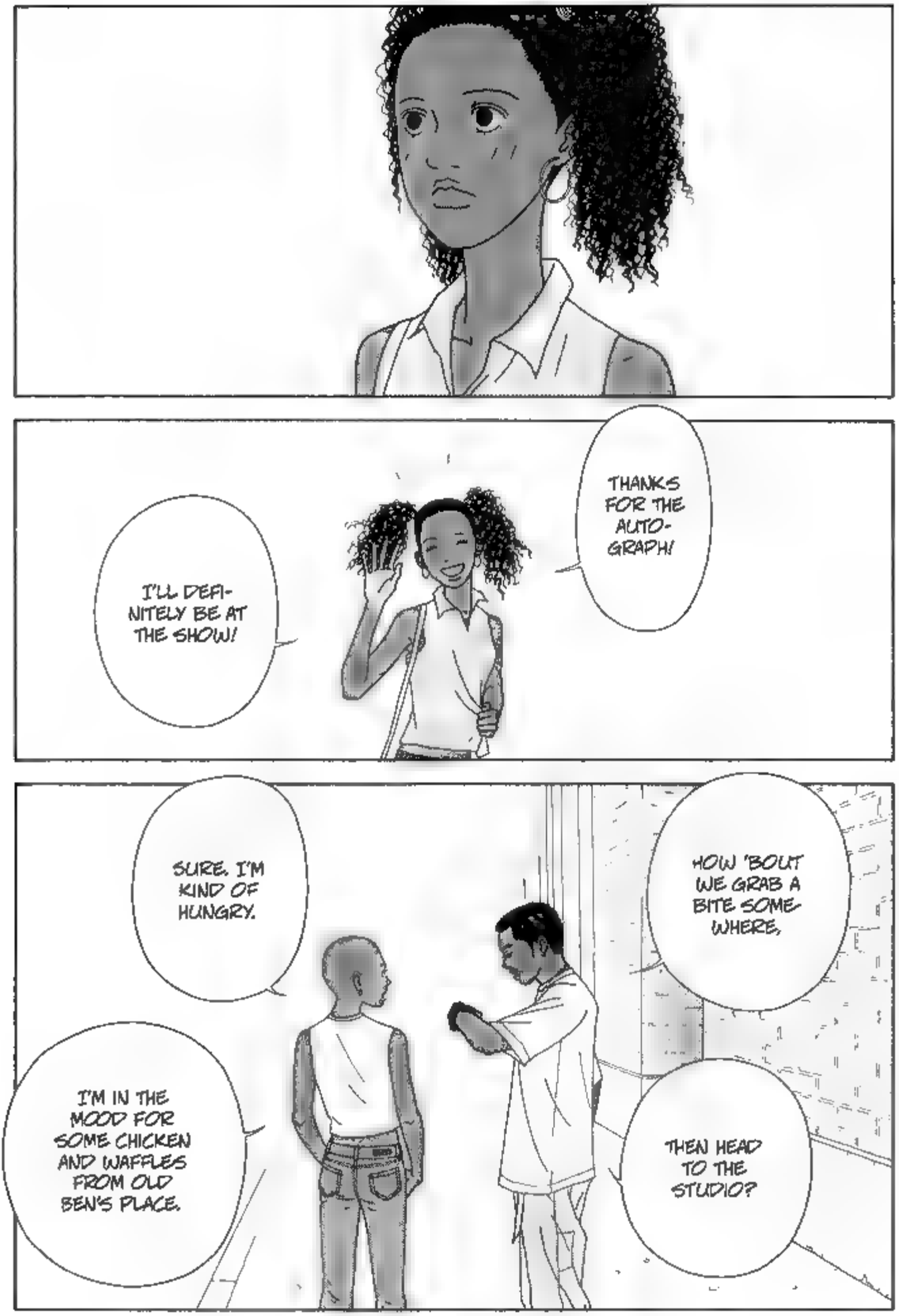
* A type of electronic organ.



I LOVE YOUR SONGS!
WOAH! I'M SO LUCKY!
THANKS. BE SURE YOU COME!
OH, WRITE "TO WENDY," OKAY? AHH, I'M SO THRILLED!
ARE YOU SURE IT'S OKAY FOR ME TO WRITE ON THIS SHIRT? IT LOOKS BRAND NEW.
I'LL DEFINITELY BE AT YOUR SHOW THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW, TOO!
I LOVE YOU SO MUCH MORE THAN THAT OTHER PERSON DOES.
BABY, DO YOU REALLY LOVE THAT OTHER PERSON SO?

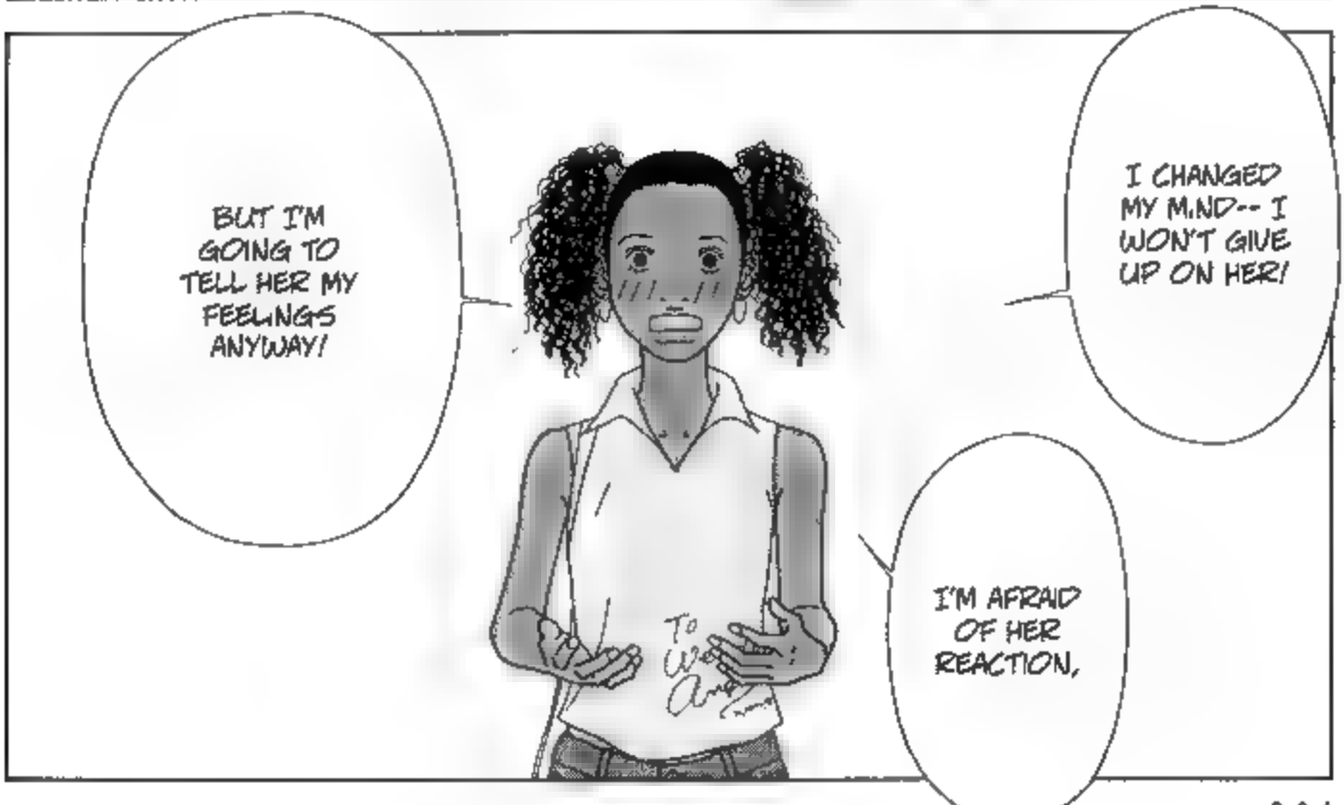
THAT SONG ALWAYS MAKES ME CRY.
IT'S ABOUT A GIRL WHO'S COMFORTING A FRIEND WITH LOVE PROBLEMS,
A FRIEND SHE CAN'T SUPPRESS HER OWN FEELINGS FOR.
To Wendy
You're weeping bitterly, and I gently put my arm around your shoulders.
Ooh, Baby.
I want you.
HEY, ANGIE, DOES THE GIRL IN THAT SONG GIVE UP ON HER OWN LOVE?
OR DOES SHE GO FOR IT AND TELL HER FRIEND HOW SHE FEELS?


HMM. WHAT WOULD YOU DO, WENDY?
I'D GIVE UP ON HER.
I FEEL LIKE IT WOULD BE A LOT BETTER TO JUST STAY HER FRIEND.
ONCE I CONFESSED, WE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GO BACK TO THE WAY THINGS WERE BEFORE.
WHEN I THINK ABOUT HOW IT WOULD RUIN MY RELATIONSHIP WITH HER,
YEAH, ME TOO.
I AGREE. I'D DO THE SAME.
SUGAR HILL
82
bathroom

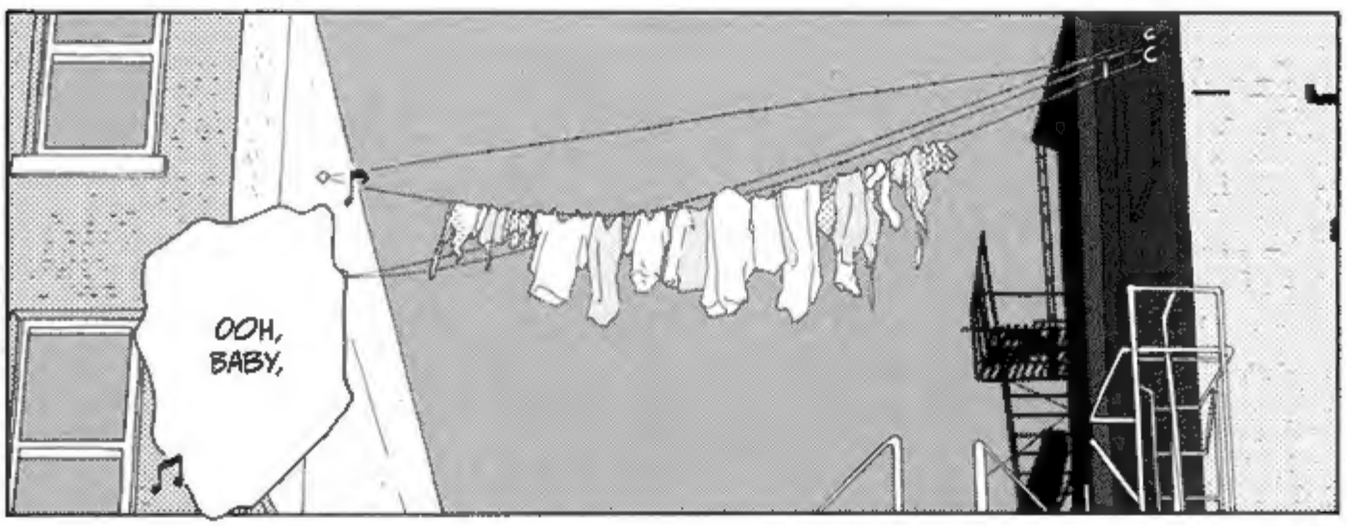

THANKS FOR THE AUTO-GRAPH!
I'LL DEFI-NITELY BE AT THE SHOW!
SURE. I'M KIND OF HUNGRY.
HOW 'BOUT WE GRAB A BITE SOME-WHERE.
I'M IN THE MOOD FOR SOME CHICKEN AND WAFFLES FROM OLD BEN'S PLACE.
THEN HEAD TO THE STUDIO?

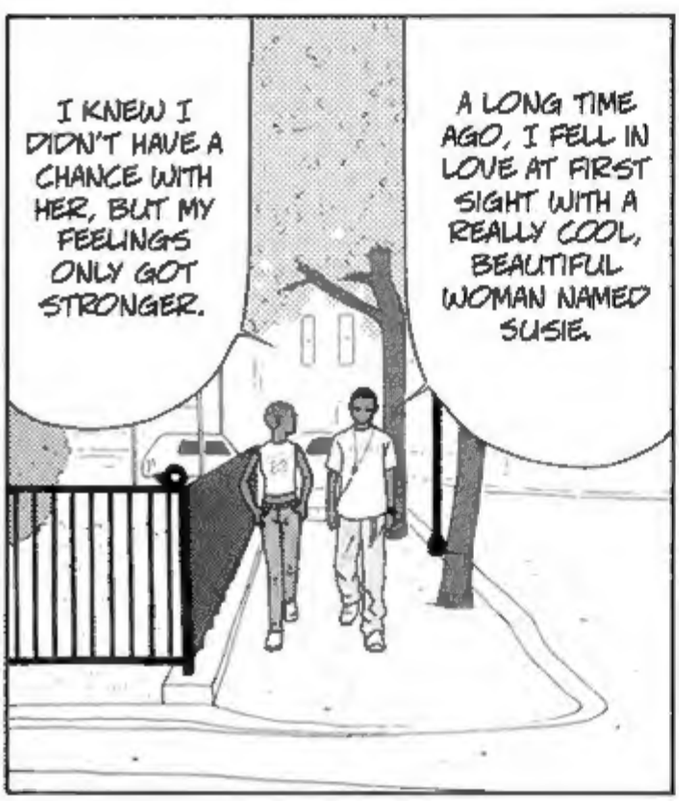
ANGIE!

HUH?

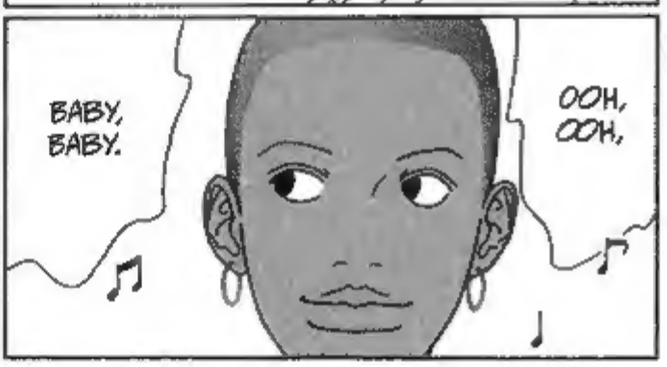

I CHANGED MY MIND-- I WON'T GIVE UP ON HER!
BUT I'M GOING TO TELL HER MY FEELINGS ANYWAY!
I'M AFRAID OF HER REACTION,

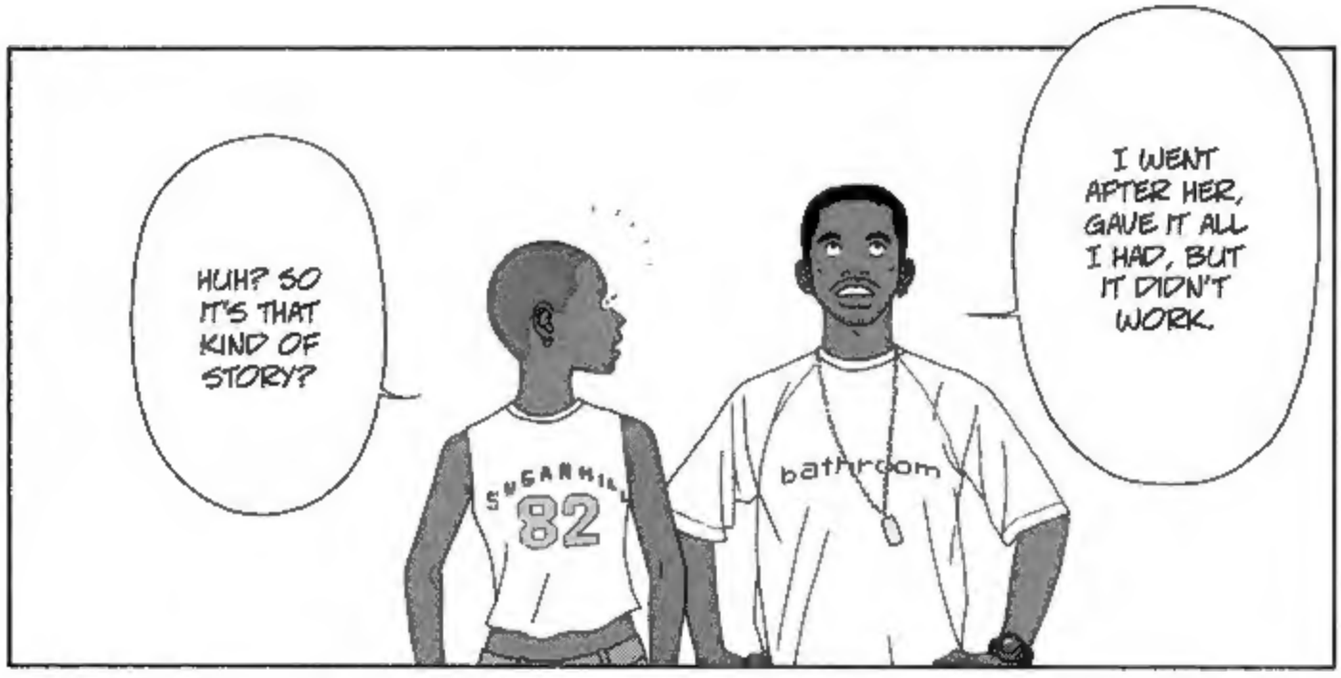
OKAY. GOOD LUCK, WENDY!


OOH, BABY,


I KNEW I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE WITH HER, BUT MY FEELINGS ONLY GOT STRONGER.
A LONG TIME AGO, I FELL IN LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT WITH A REALLY COOL, BEAUTIFUL WOMAN NAMED SUSIE.

DO YOU REALLY LOVE THAT OTHER PERSON SO?


BABY, BABY.
OOH, OOH,


I WENT AFTER HER, GAVE IT ALL I HAD, BUT IT DIDN'T WORK.
HUH? SO IT'S THAT KIND OF STORY?
SUGARHILL
82
bathroom

OH. SO IT'S THAT KIND OF STORY.

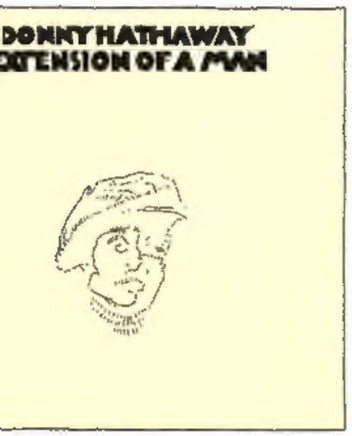
BUT IF SUSIE HADN'T REJECTED ME, I WOULDN'T HAVE MET JANET.

BY THE WAY, I REALLY LIKE THIS PLACE'S DANISHES.
WHAAT? YOU LIKE *THOSE THINGS!?* THEY'RE SO SWEET!

END

truth

Sensuous
Elisha La'Verne

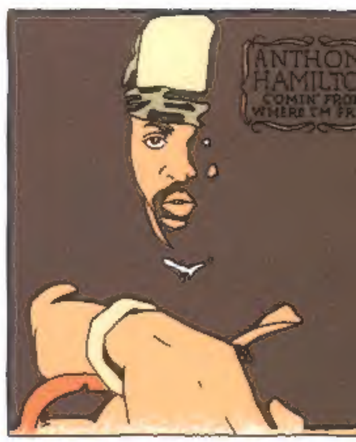

DONNY HATHAWAY
EXTENSION OF A MAN

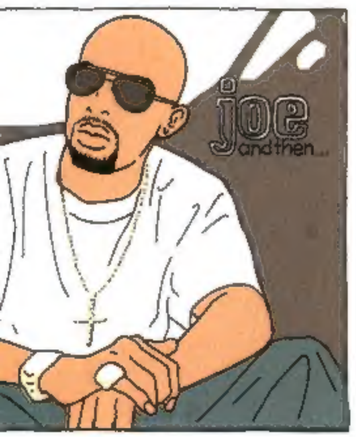
Prince

musiq
soulchild

Leon Ware
LOVE'S DRIPPIN

macy gray




joe
and then...

CURTIS MAYFIELD
Super
Fly

Beyonce

ZAPP

the isley brothers
featuring ronald isley
mission to ple

silk

"MELLOW"
ISLEYS

ARETHA FRANKLIN
SO DAMN HAPPY

AL GREEN
I CAN'T STOP

Kindred
the family soul
Surrender to Love

STAX

SWIRL

Carl Thomas
Let's Talk About It

TERRY CALLIER
TIMEPEACE

PARLIAMENT
Mothership Connection

KEITH SWEAT LIVE

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dear libby's revenge

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